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THE
INSUFFICIENCY OF THE CAUSES

To which the

INCREASE OF OUR POOR,

And of the

POOR'S RATES

HAVE BEEN COMMONLY ASCRIBED;

THE TRUE ONE STATED;

With an Enquiry into the

Mortality of Country Houses of Industry,

And a slight General View of

MR. ACLAND'S PLAN

For rendering the POOR independent.

BY THE REV. J. HOWLETT,
Vicar of Great Dunmow, Essex.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR W. RICHARDSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

MDCCLXXXVIII.

INSUFFICIENCY OF THE EVIDENCE

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C O N T E N T S.

PLAN — — —

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E R R A T A.

Page 20, l. 10 and 12, for *five*, read *seven*.

49, l. 9, dele *upon an average* ; l. 10, dele *annually*.

P L A N.

NO complaints have been more general and popular among us for time immemorial than those respecting the increased proportion of our Poor, and the rapid advance of the expences of maintaining them. And yet, when we attend to the degree of the complained of evils, and the manifest causes from which they have proceeded, perhaps no complaints will appear more astonishingly absurd. As to the increased proportion of our Poor, it has been the natural and necessary consequence of the various changes, in other respects, that have taken place in this kingdom, and which have been the sources of our greatest prosperity; and with regard to the increased expence of their maintenance, it has not been half so great as might have been expected, or as would be requisite to place them

in the same comfortable situation they were in fifty years ago.

That the reader may see, at one glance, what he may expect in the following pages, I intend, first to take a slight view of the various causes to which these evils have been imputed, point out the defect and fallacy of each, and state what appears to me the real and true ones, and which are fully adequate to the effects produced.

After these points are dispatched, I will bestow a slight examination upon some of the leading parts of one or two of the principal remedies proposed for the cure of the complained of evils.

P A R T I.

*Assigned Causes of the Increase of our Poor,
and of the Expence of maintaining them.*

THE principal causes which have been assigned for the increase of our Poor, and of the expence of maintaining them, are the following.

1. Our injudicious system of Poor's Laws, and their defective execution.
2. The great number of our ale houses.
3. The growing wickedness and profligacy of the Poor.
4. The engrossing of farms, or, as a late writer expresses it, *the absorption of the smaller ones into the larger.*

These four general causes comprehend all the minute and inferior ones to which the lamented evils have been ascribed. Let us enquire into each of them.

S E C T. I

Our injudicious System of Poor Laws, and their defective Execution.

* A writer of distinguished ingenuity, spirit and elegance, zealously contends, that our Poor Laws take away the most powerful motives to diligence and œconomy, and directly encourage idleness, vice, and profligacy. "Hope and fear," says he, "are the springs of industry. But our laws weaken the one, and destroy the other. For what encouragement have the Poor to be industrious and frugal, when they know for certain, that should they increase their store, it will be devoured by the drones? Or what cause have they to fear, when they are assured that, if by their indolence and extravagance, by their drunkenness and vices, they should be reduced to want, they shall be abundantly supplied, not only with food and raiment, but with their other accustomed luxuries, at the expence of others?†" These maxims are undoubtedly true; but can any thing be more unjust than their application? Is there a kingdom

* The Rev. Joseph Townsend, Rector of Pewsey, Wilts. Dissertation on the Poor Laws.

† Dissertation on the Poor Laws, p. 13.

in Europe in which industry, in every form and shape, in the field, in the shop, and at the loom, is more alive and spirited? Is there a kingdom in Europe where it is crowned with more distinguished success? Where does trade, commerce, manufactures, agriculture equally flourish? Where do more numerous individuals rise from meanness and poverty, to affluence and splendour? Are these proofs that our Poor Laws have weakened the springs of industry? And as to the removal of fear from the minds of the Poor, how is that effected? "Why the laws," asserts this writer, "say, that in England no man, even though by his indolence, improvidence, prodigality and vice, he may have brought himself to poverty, shall ever suffer want." Can we conceive a stranger perversion of language? Is there a poor man in his senses, and with his eyes open, who does not see that the assertion, in every valuable signification, is utterly groundless? He knows, if really criminal, the laws will punish him; he knows too that the laws, indeed, will not suffer him to be absolutely starved or frozen to death, and, that at all events his parish must, at last, maintain him; and, in the moments of thoughtless jollity, he may wantonly declare his confidence of this. But in the hours of serious reflection, which sometimes come to most persons, will he not naturally ask himself, but *how* will it maintain me? Why, as it now maintains many of my neighbours, with

hungry bellies, in filth and rags, and, if not contented with this, it will deprive me of my liberty, imprison me in a workhouse, and compel me to labour, like an arrant slave, or a senseless beast of burden, as long as I can lift a hand or stir a foot. Did ever any man, less stupid than an ass, *seriously* use such an argument to encourage himself in vice and indolence; or *really* think it a satisfactory reason for omitting his utmost endeavours to maintain and support himself in tolerable comfort? No young fellow, in health and strength, who possesses the heart and spirit of an Englishman, but would spurn the idea, and zealously resolve to work even his flesh from his bones rather than sink into the horrid situation. And has he not a degree of encouragement hereto in the example of some of his more industrious labouring neighbours? Does he not behold a few of them, at least, men indeed perhaps, of uncommon skill and dexterity at work, in spite of every increasing difficulty, yet by care, œconomy, and incessant exertion, still support themselves and families, not only above absolute want and misery, but in some degree of comfort and happiness? He flatters himself he has equal abilities, and shall be equally successful. With spirit and animation he makes the attempt. However it may excite the smile, or provoke the sneer of the unfeeling insolence of wealth, I am persuaded, three fourths of our young labourers set out in life with these generous ideas, and, for
many

many a year, act up to them. At length, however, their family becoming numerous, they find their scanty earnings inadequate to their increasing necessities; for some time, like men that are drowning, they struggle hard; but perceiving all in vain, and that sink they must, their heart dies within them; they are overwhelmed in hopeless poverty, and all its dismal consequences; farewell all future industry, all future care, all future oeconomy or neatness; henceforward there is nothing but increasing sloth, rags and wretchedness. In a word, I see not, in a general speculative view, how the very essence and spirit of our Poor Laws can have weakened the springs of industry, or incited to sloth, and vice, and profligacy. But to approach still nearer the fact, our Poor Laws, with a few successive alterations and improvements, have now existed upwards of two hundred years: must not their full operation, independent of the increase of people, and some other causes, have taken place in the course of the first generation after their commencement; and must not the expences of the Poor have remained nearly the same to the present time? But is not the fact, just the reverse? Towards the close of the last century the expences of maintaining the Poor under the direction of these laws, had arisen about half a million; from that time to about the year 1750, they advanced about half a million more, and, since that æra, they have increased to almost,

if

if not altogether, two millions, that is, in the first hundred and fifty years they rose to about half a million; in the next fifty years they advanced with triple that rapidity; and in the last thirty or forty, their progression has been more than six times as fast as in the first period, and nearly three times as great as in the second. Can effects so widely different have proceeded from the same individual cause?

“ But,” says Mr. Townsend *, “ about the year
 “ 1723, such an alteration in our Poor Laws took
 “ place as necessarily occasioned a rapid increase
 “ of the rates.” In the preamble of an act passed
 “ soon after the accession of the present family,
 “ we hear the justices of peace charged with
 “ granting relief, under colour of a proviso
 “ strained and misapplied upon untrue suggestions,
 “ and sometimes upon false and frivolous pre-
 “ tences. The great increase in the parish rates,
 “ parliament attributed to this abuse of power,
 “ and to remedy the evil thus clearly stated,
 “ they enacted, That no relief should be granted
 “ by a justice, until oath be made before him of
 “ some matter which he shall judge a reason-
 “ able cause, and that application had been made,
 “ &c. (9 Geo. I. cap. 7.) This clause, thus worded,
 “ says Mr. T——, changed at once the whole

* Observations on the various plans offered to the public for the relief of the Poor.

“ system

“ system of our Poor’s Law, and from this time
 “ the evil has advanced with great rapidity.” I
 am not, I confess, clear sighted enough to discern how this act could have worked such wonders as are here suggested. I will not, however, enter upon speculative reasoning, where facts are the only decisive evidence. Has then Mr. T—— shewn that any uncommon rapidity in the advance of the rates actually did take place immediately after passing this act? He asserts it, indeed, but the proof he has not even attempted, but, on the contrary, has left it under the appearance of great improbability. The rates had risen to above half a million at the end of the last century; it seems generally allowed that they were only half a million more about the year 1750, but the Commons loudly complained in the year 1723; we have just heard that they had been rapidly advancing from the beginning of the century. If their complaints were founded, surely this advance could not have been less than 200,000 l. per annum; but if they were even near that degree of advancement, they could not have very greatly mended their pace between that time and the year 1750. Nor does Mr. T’s own Table, given at the end of his pamphlet, indicate any such sudden acceleration. But supposing this actually did take place, the progression since the year 1750 has been still vastly greater, and consequently the argument

fails at the end, where its force should appear in its utmost vigour.

Mr. Gilbert, the better to establish his general position of the necessity of a reform of our Poor Laws, has thought proper to give a very disadvantageous representation of those laws, especially with regard to the two principal officers appointed for their execution, *the Overseers of the Poor, and the Justices of the Peace*. "The Overseers," says he, p. 11, of his Considerations, &c. "are intrusted with the making of the rates, and assessments for raising money to maintain and employ the Poor; they inspect and superintend the Workhouse, and, in short, take upon them the whole government of the Poor." Can any thing be more unjust than this description! What parish has Mr. Gilbert ever known managed in this manner? Is not the very reverse generally the case? Are not the Overseers, except in cases of immediate necessity, merely official instruments in the hands of the parish at large? Have not the parishioners their monthly and other meetings, for the discussion of parochial affairs? Are not rates and assessments made in consequence of the approbation of the majority of persons thus assembled? And is not the inspection and superintendence of the Workhouse, and, in short, the whole management of the Poor, under the same general direction?

This

This being the case, what ground of complain, is it, "that Overseers," as Mr. G. next observest "are annually appointed by Justices of the Peace, according to a sort of rotation among the substantial householders, without any regard to the qualification of the persons nominated?" Does not the Overseer thus appointed, in some measure, act under the inspection of each individual? And is not each individual immediately interested to prevent the lavish squandering away the parish money? Besides, in most parishes of considerable extent, though different persons are successively appointed to the office, yet one and the same man, by the general consent and approbation of the parishioners, usually keeps the accounts, and transacts the business; always, however, under inspection and superintendence as above. This delegation of the office does not seem to be at all necessary in small parishes, in which, without any such advantage, the rates are seldom so high as in the larger ones.

After giving this fallacious idea of the manner in which the parochial assessments are made, and parish business transacted, Mr. G. informs us, "that the Overseer *swears* to his account, and the Justice passes and signs it as a thing of course, without any examination of the *items*." Does not this seem to insinuate that his *Worship* is just as bad as we were before taught to believe the Over-

seer? But, in the name of wonder, where is the necessity that the Justice should examine *items*, or bestow any further particular care and pains about the matter? Does he not know that the account which is brought him must, in the natural course of things, have undergone the repeated discussion of the parish? Has not every individual, who feels himself aggrieved, a right to complain? Would not self-interest dictate such complaint? And, if it be shewn to be just, must it not be listened to and redressed?

Mr. G. further insinuates the most contemptuous idea of parish officers, and quotes, from Dr. Burn's History of our Poor Laws, a burlesque description of what is called an *active Overseer*. And it must be acknowledged that there are individual instances that well enough correspond with this account. But did there ever exist a body of men without fools and knaves in it? Even that long concatenated list of *county commissioners, district committees, and district agents*, so strenuously recommended, would not be exempt from them. But if it was intended as descriptive of the general character and conduct of parochial Overseers, (and if it was not, it was absurd to introduce it at all) I cannot help thinking it extremely injurious. Who are these Overseers? In towns, they are the substantial tradesmen; in the country, the substantial farmers. Is there any order of men better acquainted with the character, conduct,

conduct, and necessities of the Poor? Is there any order of men so immediately interested to prevent mismanagement, and the lavish expenditure of the parish money? At the same time, is there any order of men more concerned in the humane support, in the health and strength and bodily vigour of the Poor? The better these are preserved, the better and the cheaper will their work be performed. Here and there indeed a gentleman or clergyman of distinguished talents, and particular turn for things of this sort, may understand parish business tolerably well; yet even these must generally labour under great disadvantages, from a want of that perpetual intercourse with the poor labouring people, and that intimate acquaintance with their manners, wants, and merits, which the common farmer necessarily has. But as to the bulk and general run of the clergy and country gentlemen, into whose hands there appears so great a zeal to put the management of the Poor, they ever were and ever will be, as to knowledge and ability in these matters, mere children, compared with the substantial, experienced, skilful country farmers. Of these there are some in almost every parish, who, though perhaps unpolished in their manners, inelegant in their language, and destitute of the powers of eloquence to display their judgment to the best advantage, are yet, as far as their sphere of observation extends, as rational and intelligent a set of men as any this kingdom can boast.

Upon

Upon the whole, though our Poor Laws may be imperfect, and their execution defective; though there are doubtless many unqualified Overseers, and though there are some particular instances of lavish expenditure of parish money, and of injudicious management of parish concerns, we have yet been presented with no satisfactory proof that any of these deficiencies are so great and general, as to have caused that rapid increase of our Poor and of our Poor's-rates which has taken place.

Besides, before we ascribe these evils either to the spirit of our Poor Laws themselves, or to their defective execution, we should surely enquire how the matter stands in other kingdoms of Europe, where no such laws, nor any thing similar to them, ever existed. Has the proportion of their Poor, and the expence of maintaining them remained unaltered? So far from it, turn which way you will, to the north or the south, the east or the west, you will find them both, I believe, advanced altogether as much, if not more, than with us.

Let us travel to the north, and visit our fellow subjects, the Scots, whose œconomical care and prudent management, have been so much extolled. What information do we here receive? In the poor house of the parish of St. Cuthbert's, in the City of Edinburgh, the average number of
 Poor

Poor for three years, ending with the year 1765, was 104; in the three years ending with 1785, this average was increased to 170; and the annual average expence of maintaining them was advanced, in the same compass of time, from about 411 l. to above 668 l.; an advance nearly, if not altogether, equal to that of our Poor-rates.

A still more striking account we have in a Letter to the Citizens of Glasgow, printed in 1783. The ingenious writer informs us, " that " within the last fifty years, the sum allowed " in Glasgow for maintaining the lowest class " of the Poor, has risen from about 600 l. to " 3000 l. sterling in the year." Can this be more than paralleled in England, where our Poor Laws are so heavily complained of?

Let us next cross the Channel, and enquire among our sprightly political neighbours, the French. What account do they give us? The very ingenious and eloquent Monsieur Pataud, Vicar of the Parish of St. Paterne, in the City of Orleans, has lately favoured me with two or three letters on the subject. I will not attempt a direct translation of them, both because it would take up too much room, and because I despair of doing justice to the elegant originals. Their general substance is as follows: " He never, indeed," he says, " extended his curiosity so far
" as

" as to inform himself, which of the two nations
 " has the sad superiority in the number of its
 " Poor; that he can, however, venture to assert
 " with the utmost confidence, that those of France,
 " within a very few years, have been extremely
 " multiplied; that notwithstanding the public
 " contributions for their maintenance are much
 " more abundant than ever, they are still in a
 " very deplorable situation, and that their capital
 " is by no means their only city in which are at
 " once presented to the view the astonishing con-
 " trast between the most extravagant luxury, on
 " the one hand, and the most shocking distress,
 " on the other. He intimates, that Orleans,
 " being situate between the richest and the poorest
 " provinces, may be considered as a kind of stand-
 " ard, or medium, by which to judge of the
 " kingdom at large; that the total population of
 " this city is 50,000 persons, of whom one third
 " receive charitable assistance from their supe-
 " riors; that some of their almost infinite sources
 " of support are the following: 1st. The annual
 " collections made at Easter by the rector of each
 " parish. 2dly. The fees paid by the richer parts
 " of the community for dispensation of banns in
 " marriage; for dispensation from the legal im-
 " pediments to this connection, arising from con-
 " sanguinity, or the particular seasons of the year.
 " The common artist and tradesman pay for this
 " about two livres, the gentleman frequently two
 " louis

“ Louis d’or. 3dly. The voluntary donations made
 “ on Sundays during divine service; at all wed-
 “ dings of any distinction, and at all public ce-
 “ remonies of peculiar celebrity. 4thly. The al-
 “ most perpetual legacies of the wealthy and opu-
 “ lent. 5thly. Those possessions for which no
 “ legal claimant can be found. 6thly. The an-
 “ nual dividends of certain sums of money, called
 “ Pecule, placed in the public funds. 7thly. The
 “ general distributions made by the several officers
 “ of the city, of the sums which used to be squan-
 “ dered away in expensive and ridiculous enter-
 “ tainments. These numerous resources have
 “ most of them been greatly enlarged, and many
 “ new ones continually invented by industry,
 “ zealous in the cause of humanity. All, how-
 “ ever, have lately been found unequal to the
 “ proper relief of the increased numbers and in-
 “ creased necessities of the indigent: persons
 “ could scarcely go out of their houses with-
 “ out being harassed with the insupportable im-
 “ portunity of clamorous beggars. In vain did
 “ public authority arm itself against this pres-
 “ sing crowd of miserable famished wretches;
 “ force drove them away one instant, habit brought
 “ them back the next. It was at length disco-
 “ vered that prisons were useless; milder methods
 “ were therefore adopted, and, about three years
 “ ago, there arose what is called a Philanthropic
 “ Society, which now annually raises 25,000 li-

" vres for the more comfortable maintenance of
 " the aged and infirm, the widow and the orphan,
 " most strictly forbidding, at the same time, the
 " objects of its bounty ever to beg. The amount
 " of these several contributions is about 360,000
 " livres, or 1,000 pounds sterling a year. But
 " notwithstanding these, and similar exertions of
 " benevolence in every part of the kingdom, no
 " season of uncommon severity arrives, but vast
 " numbers of entire families, especially in the
 " country, perish for want, are strictly and literally
 " starved and frozen to death." Hear this, ye
 who so heavily complain of our legal provision for
 the Poor, and that two millions are annually spent
 for their support ! Hear this, ye who think * " they
 " would be more effectually relieved if no other
 " laws existed but the first great laws of human
 " nature, and the general benevolence of man-
 " kind." These dreadful events repeatedly hap-
 pen in a nation, as much " actuated by the
 " dictates of philosophy, and the finer feelings of
 " the human heart, as much under the influence
 " of that piety, which rejoices to relieve the wants
 " and distresses of their fellow-creatures, as any
 " other whatever." Are such calamities known
 in England ? Have we had this rapid increase
 of poverty, or have we the like shocking propor-
 tion of Paupers ?

* Dissertation on the Poor Laws, 2d edition, page 4.

These things have not taken place in France, from that encouragement which idleness receives from its confidence in the kindness of the humane; but from causes which other pieces of intelligence, communicated by my obliging correspondent, sufficiently indicate. “ Within the last
 “ forty years, the price of provisions, in general,
 “ has been doubled, and of some of the im-
 “ mediate necessaries of life even more. The
 “ bushel of wheat, weighing fifty pounds, used to
 “ be sold for forty French sols, or not quite one
 “ shilling and sixpence English; it now fetches,
 “ though reckoned cheap, three livres ten sols, or
 “ about three shillings. Wood, their principal
 “ firing, has risen from fifteen livres a corde to
 “ thirty-four; butchers meat, from four and six
 “ sols a pound to seven and ten *. The price of
 “ labour, mean time, has advanced only one
 “ fourth. The wages of the farmer’s domestic
 “ servants, according to their strength, age, and
 “ ability, are now from 100 to 200 livres a year;
 “ their daily labourers have from one to two livres
 “ a day; each of these respectively, within the
 “ compass of the time just mentioned, were about
 “ three quarters as much.”

Whoever duly considers the preceding account, must, I think, acknowledge these facts; that the

* All these articles are more advanced, and considerably dearer at Paris.

proportion of Poor in France is greater than in England; that the expence of maintaining them has as rapidly increased, and that its present amount, due allowance being made for their inferior price of provisions, and yet very near equality of wages, is considerably greater than ours. Even without this allowance, indeed, if we suppose the other parts of the kingdom contribute in proportion to the City of Orleans, the total annual sum is, at least, *five millions sterling*. Is there a Briton, whose heart does not disdain the idea that France can raise five millions a year better than England can two?

Should we continue our enquiries over the rest of the Continent, I make no doubt we should meet with similar information. If then there has been this general increase of Poor, and of the expence for their support, the fair presumption is, that this cannot have happened with us, either from our system of Poor Laws, or their defective execution, but has been occasioned by some general cause, which, more or less, has diffused its operation over the whole face of Europe. What this cause is, I hope, we shall by and by satisfactorily shew. At present I will proceed to examine the next asserted cause of the evil under consideration, namely, the great number of our *Ale-houses*.

S E C T. II.

The great Number of Ale houses.

Another cause to which the vast increase of our Poor Rates has been imputed is the great number of ale houses. It must undoubtedly be acknowledged that more of these than are absolutely necessary are pernicious. Mr. Godshall, in his late valuable *Plan of parochial and provincial Police*, informs us they "are now so increased, " that an honest peasant, who would spend his " money with his family if these temptations were " less obvious, must have a more than ordinary " share of self denial if he escape such numerous " attractions." Where Mr. Godshall has found this prodigious increase I cannot tell. Were I to judge from what has come under my own immediate observation, I should conclude, that, in proportion to the number of our people, they have been considerably diminished, and still continued to be so. In my own hundred of Dunmow they have decreased at least one-sixth within the last thirty years; in the hundred of Hinckford, immediately adjoining, and of vastly greater extent, the diminution has not been less; and the same has taken place wherever I have made enquiry, though the population has been perpetually advancing. As far then as ale houses are concerned,

concerned, if the reasoning alluded to be just, our Poor Rates ought to have been gradually diminishing.

Mr. Godshall observes, " that near Dunmow
 " in Essex there is a district of seventeen parishes
 " without one ale house;" which, he says, " is
 " *proof positive* that they are not universally ne-
 " cessary." The fact here asserted is certainly
 true; but how far this *proof positive* is meant to
 be extended I know not. If it indicates that this
 instance proves that ale houses are unnecessary in
 every field and meadow, at the distance of every
 few yards, or even in every parish of the smallest
 size, it will readily be admitted. But this is a
 conclusion of trifling importance. For it is to be
 remarked that the parishes exempt from these sup-
 posed nuisances are of such narrow extent, that the
 inhabitants who are so disposed, can easily procure
 liquor from the neighbouring ones; it is also a
 general observation of the keepers of public
 houses, that such persons are better customers
 than their own parishioners, and it is a notorious
 fact, that the Poor Rates in these favoured spots
 have advanced full as fast as in other places.

S E C T. III.

Increased Wickedness and Profligacy of the Poor.

The increased wickedness and profligacy of the Poor, and that this is a primary cause of the increase of parish expences, was a popular and current complaint more than a hundred years ago, and has probably been continued through every successive generation.

In the year 1678 Mr. T. Firmin, in a Letter to a Friend, observes, “ for the most part our poor
“ children are brought up in sloth and idleness,
“ and taught nothing in their younger years which
“ may serve to maintain them when they are old.”

In the year 1696, the clamour with regard to the Poor, and the burden of the Poor Rates, having attracted the notice of the Commons, they referred it to the Board of Trade, to consider of the fact. Mr. Locke, one of the commissioners, in October 1697, says, in a draught of the representation of the Board, “ the cause of the multiplicity of the
“ Poor, and the increase of the taxes for their maintenance, can be nothing else but the relaxation
“ of discipline, and corruption of manners; virtue
“ and industry being as constant companions on the
“ one

“ one side, as *vice* and *idleness* are on the other*.” Such was the judgment of the great Mr. Locke; and I shall only remark upon it, that had he displayed no greater penetration in his moral and metaphysical researches, than he has done in this matter of civil concern, his name would not have come down to us with that celebrity it has now so justly acquired. When it is remembered that at this very time, not only had there been that gradual increase in the price of provisions, in general, which naturally takes place in the advancing state of societies, but that wheat, for five or six years together, had been 7s. 6d. a bushel, and immediately before not above 3 or 4, need any man *seriously* enquire what was the cause of the increased numbers and wretchedness of the Poor?

“ We are burdened,” says Mr. Daniel Defoe, in an Address to the House of Commons, printed in 1704, “ we are burdened with a crowd of clamour-
 “ ing, unimployed, unprovided for Poor; people
 “ who make the nation uneasy, clog our parishes,
 “ and make themselves worthy of laws, and peculiar
 “ management to dispose of and direct them. I can
 “ produce, on a short summons, thousands of fami-
 “ lies in England, within my particular knowledge,
 “ who go in rags, and their children want bread,

* Mr. Chalmers' Estimate of the comparative strength of Great Britain, p. 121. 4to edit.

“ whose

“ whose fathers can earn their 15 or 25 shillings
 “ per week. I have paid six or seven men to-
 “ gether on a Saturday night, the least 10s. and
 “ some 30s. for work, and have seen them go
 “ with it directly to the ale-house, lie there till
 “ Monday, spend it every penny, and run in debt
 “ to boot, and not give a farthing of it to their
 “ families, though all of them had wives and
 “ children. Hence comes poverty, parish charges,
 “ and beggary. If ever any of these wretches fall
 “ sick, all they would ask was a pass to the parish
 “ they lived at, and their wife and children to the
 “ door a begging.” Here is such a description of
 idleness and beggary, debauchery and drunkenness,
 villany, vice, and wickedness, as one would think
 nothing could well exceed; yet have we been re-
 peatedly assured that they have all been perpetually
 increasing ever since, and that even very lately
 “ licentiousness has made a rapid progress, and a
 “ deluge of iniquity broken in upon us.” If all
 these accounts be true, human society among the
 lower orders in this kingdom must now be a picture
 of the infernal regions.

“ The robberies lately committed,” says Mr.
 Godshall, “ do not seem to have been the effects
 “ of the conclusion of a war; for soldiers and
 “ sailors have not appeared to have been concerned
 “ in them; but they rather seem to have been
 “ occasioned *a diffused depravity in the minds of*

“ *the offenders*, and a general aversion to honest employment of any kind *.” If this Gentleman only alludes to certain particular robberies in his own immediate neighbourhood, his remark, for aught I know, may be just; but if the application be intended to the kingdom in general, it cannot be admitted, without contradicting universal experience. The close of a war has always been followed by an unusual number of thefts and robberies. And if this ever happens, when was it more likely to do so than after the termination of the last? When was any war finished with fleets and armies so unimpaired, or soldiers and sailors so numerous? When were the militia returned to their families with longer and more confirmed habits of idleness? When, as might naturally be expected, were our jails more crowded with felons than in the years immediately subsequent? Were none of these *soldiers* or *sailors*, or those some way connected with the army or navy, or whose employment and sources of support were greatly diminished or totally lost by the discontinuance of hostilities? That there was a *diffused depravity in the minds of the offenders*, there can be no doubt; but the only question is, who the offenders *were*; and with respect to many of them, at least, the decision may safely be left to common sense and common observation. Besides there was another circumstance which will account for an unusual number of robberies, especially in most of the maritime counties, without the suppo-

* Plan of provincial and parochial Police, p. 2.

sition of a general increased degree of vice and iniquity. A late Act of Parliament threw such obstructions and embarrassments in the way of a distinguished branch of the smuggling trade, as at once deprived vast numbers of active young men of their usual means of subsistence. Hardy, bold, and daring, from their course of life; ashamed to beg, and, from long habits of idleness, unwilling to dig, or submit to any other laborious work, where is the surprise if they plundered on the highway, or ventured on any other desperate wickedness to supply their immediate necessities?

After all, however, it must be acknowledged that there are some considerations which incline one to think that there is really a greater degree of moral depravity, and a greater frequency of vice, of certain particular kinds especially, among our present Poor, than there were formerly. But this I must beg leave to observe has not been the *cause*, but the *consequence* of their poverty. Human nature is pretty much the same in every age, and in every rank and class of men; and their peculiar virtues and vices are generally the growth of their immediate situation and condition. *Give me neither poverty nor riches*, said the wise Agur; *feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain; or lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?* Lying and theft are the natural offspring of extreme indigence;

gence; insolence and blasphemy are as commonly the attendants of excessive prosperity. As then our Poor are now certainly poorer, and have been so for these twenty years past, than in any former period, the vices peculiar to their condition are probably encreased likewise. But these vices, as just now observed, cannot properly be considered as the *cause* of the poverty complained of, but the *consequence*.

There is a respect, however, in which the increased vices of the Poor may have occasioned an additional increase of poverty. Their excessive penury has more generally deprived their children of all share of good education, and of all moral and religious instruction; hence they are become more destitute of principle; in the mean time they are more commonly trained up in the habits of pilfering and stealing, to supply their own and their parents necessities. At length, they leave the parental habitation, and go to service. This being a sudden transition from pinching want to affluent plenty; from hunger and wretchedness to a species of extravagance and luxury, they very naturally become insolent, licentious and profligate; unprincipled intercourse between the sexes takes place, illegitimate children are produced, and marriage, which ought always to be the result of free choice, is a matter of compulsion, before either party is provided for the maintenance of a family. They carry with them to their
wretched

wretched but the habit of full luxurious living, which they have contracted in the house of the large farmer or the wealthy tradesman; and, possessing perhaps little skill or œconomy for domestic management, soon sink into the depths of poverty, and become a heavy burden to their parish*.

Let it, however, be remembered, that we have a strong propensity to judge too severely in this respect. It is remarkable, that as every age deems the present more wicked than the preceding ones; so, on the contrary, every rank and order of society seem to look upon their own as the best and most virtuous of all. The higher orders think themselves alone possessed of every excellence, and regard the lower as vile and contemptible, destitute of every principle of honour and honesty, and prone to whatever is base and worthless. The latter, in their turn, are equally conceited, and look upon the former as proud and haughty and insolent, cruel oppressive and tyrannical. The middle classes, mean time, are not a whit behind either; but consider both those above and those

* Sunday schools, if carefully superintended by the clergy, liberally encouraged by the laity, seem excellently fitted and to raise and cultivate moral and religious principles in the minds of the rising generation of Poor; but as very little of either seems likely to take place in general, I am afraid no great things are to be expected, without the immediate interference of Government; and even that possibly might do more harm than good.

beneath

beneath them as equally vicious and profligate, and as equally objects of dislike and aversion. Hence it is that the sentiments of all, respecting each other, are commonly false and erroneous. If therefore, when we sit in judgment upon the morals of the Poor, we remember this general propensity, we shall form ideas of them much more favourable and friendly.

But whatever their vice and immorality, I must again maintain, it has not originally been the *cause* of their extreme indigence, but the *consequence*, and therefore should only be an additional motive to an eager concurrence in any wise and judicious Plan for bettering and improving their condition. This accomplished, every thing else will follow of course.

S E C T. IV.

Engrossing of Farms, or the Absorption of the smaller Ones into the Larger.

Mr. Kent, a writer of deserved reputation, asserts, in his *Hints to gentlemen of landed property*, p. 218, “ that although many causes may have
“ contributed towards the present high price of
“ provisions, yet that no single cause has so powerfully operated to this end as the destructive
“ practice, which has prevailed for near * half a

* He might have said for *two centuries* both in this and most other kingdoms in Europe, which have been much improved.

“ century

" century back, of demolishing small farms." And an anonymous writer, in a pamphlet very lately published, endeavours to prove that the most natural and obvious cause, and perhaps the only one to be assigned, of the increase of the Poor, and of the expence of maintaining them, *is the absorption of the smaller farms into the greater, and the depriving, or not allowing the common labourer a small portion of land to his cottage.*

Both these writers have talked in so lax, defultory, and indeterminate a manner, that it is not perfectly easy to know by what principles of reasoning they have attempted to establish these positions. As far as I have been able to collect them, the principal ones seem to be these :

1. That the small farmer does great part of the work of his farm himself.
2. That he requires proportionably more servants, labourers, and cattle, than the large one.
3. That he raises a greater quantity of manure.
4. That he makes certain articles of provision, such as milk, butter, eggs, poultry, pork, calves, &c. plentiful, which, by the large farmer, are rendered scarce, because he thinks them not worth his notice.

The first and second of these reasons seem so directly opposite to each other, that perhaps they
might

might safely be left to themselves for their mutual destruction. But as the first of them is chiefly advanced by Mr. Kent, and scarcely noticed by the other writer, it may not be amiss to examine its separate weight. "Every man," says this Gentleman, "works more chearfully, zealously, and "diligently for himself than for another." True. But what does it signify whether this alacrity, zeal, and diligence, are exerted immediately upon his own farm or that of another? And may not this take place in both cases? If the labourer works by the piece, does he not, to all intents and purposes, work for himself? The more dexterous and active he is, the more he performs; the more he performs, the more he gains; his gains too are certain, free from the risks of chance, and times and seasons; on which the farmer, with anxious hopes and fears, must always depend for the final reward of his labours. The intrinsic value of the work remains the same, and we have only to suppose that the little farmer works in this manner for his neighbour, and his neighbour for him, and the desired end is reciprocally secured, and the boasted superior zeal and alacrity in question is scarcely any thing to the purpose.

But perhaps I mistake our author, and his argument only means that the little farmer can afford his produce cheaper than the great one, because he executes part of the labour of his farm with his

own hands; whereas the latter does none of it himself, but pays others for doing it. This, at first sight, appears plausible; but, if it has really any force, it must have nearly the same in manufactures as in agriculture. Let this maxim, then, be applied to the towns of Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, &c. let the single capitals of two or three hundred thousand pounds be divided into several thousand parts, and the present myriads of labouring mechanics be converted into two-thirds as many masters, each carrying on his separate business for himself. What would be the consequence? What would avail their zeal and diligence, because working for themselves? Could there be that division and simplification of labour, so essential to its expeditious performance? Would not their small capitals, mean time, render large profits indispensably necessary? But must not both these circumstances unavoidably enhance the price of their goods? And must not this at once impose a tax upon all the rest of our own kingdom, and effectually shut them out of every foreign market? Must not these manufactures of course decline, and these now flourishing towns finally depopulate and dwindle away almost as fast as they have hitherto increased and multiplied? Similar in kind, if not equal in degree, would be the result of all our large farms being converted into small ones. This I could prove to demonstration, by a course of detailed reasoning, if it did not somewhat interfere

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with what I intend to say to the other reasons assigned by our author.

The second argument adduced to establish the idea that the consolidation of small farms have multiplied the Poor, and increased the expence of maintaining them, is, *that small farms require more servants, labourers, and cattle, than large ones.* If this assertion were really true, it would be one of the most powerful arguments against the system we are opposing that could be conceived. For what is it which renders the Poor so unable to support themselves as the high price of provisions? But who can afford to sell these provisions cheapest, he who raises them at *great* expence, or he who does it at *little*? The small farmer, if he really, as our author asserts, employs more servants, labourers, &c. than the great one; is he not at proportionably greater expence in raising his produce? and must he not sell it so much the dearer, or break?

But, says the argument, the consequence of the large farmer having engrossed one or more small farms in his neighbourhood is, that the small farmers are converted into labourers, and other persons thrown out of employment, and must starve, or be fed by the parish. Allow for a moment that the latter is in some measure really the case, the evil would be short and transient. The people on this particular spot would soon be proportionably diminished, and the provisions heretofore consumed by
 them.

them would go to feed an equal number elsewhere, (employed perhaps in manufactures) at a lower price, because raised at less expence.

But grant that small farms prevent the increase of poverty, because they employ more hands; let the argument have its course. Compel the farmer to throw aside the plough, and use the spade only. Would not this employ five times the number of hands? But what would be the final result? Could any increase of produce pay the increased expence of cultivation? The farmers would necessarily be ruined; both they and their labourers must soon be starved, unless fed by the manufacturers; who, poor creatures, would be unable to feed themselves; for no provisions are brought from the country, whence alone they could hope for food; or they are brought at so high a price, as their wages would not allow the purchase of them, and their manufacture itself must soon be destroyed. Thus the termination of our author's *ingenious* reasoning, instead of a more comfortable support of the Poor, is the total ruin of every branch of society by one universal famine!

But I desire not to take this advantage of his argument. Indeed I cannot. The main fact he asserts is true only in part. The great farmer employs fewer servants and labourers than the small one, merely while the degree of cultivation remains the same. But in at least nine cases out of ten, being enabled, from his larger capital, to bestow

double and triple the expence to accomplish any mode or species of improvement the land may require, he eagerly employs all the hands he can find, and seldom fails to receive a full compensation in his abundance of grain, and grafs, and cattle.

That this may not be thought mere speculation, I beg the reader's attention to the following fact. In a parish adjoining to this a man occupied a farm of £. 12 a year, with a capital equal to what is generally possessed by farmers of that size. Unable to bear the expence of that treatment, and those improvements which the land stood in absolute need of, he continued for many years to plow and sow, to toil and fatigue himself with the most intense industry; rising early, late taking rest, working harder and faring harder than the most laborious of mere labouring husbandmen; till, at length, his farm produced not corn sufficient to repay the little money he could afford to bestow upon it, exclusive of the rent, the rates, and the tithes. Of course he was obliged to quit it. A larger farmer in the same parish, using about ten times as much land immediately adjacent, took it, covered as it was with weeds and thistles, and, in all respects, in the most wretched and impoverished condition. At Michaelmas 1770 he entered the premises, and the next summer, being skilful and spirited, he fallowed the whole of it, consisting of about twenty acres; manured and land-ditched the greater part, and

and the following spring sowed it with barley. The expences and produce of the two years were exactly as follows.

EXPENCES.

	£.	s.	d.
Land ditching, - - - -	20	2	7
Summer's ploughing, - - -	20	10	0
10 quarters of seed barley at £1 5s.			
per quarter, - - - -	12	10	0
Raising manure and carrying it on	27	3	10
Two year's Poor Rates - - -	7	0	0
Two years great and small tithes,	5	8	0
Harvesting the crop, - - -	5	0	0
Two years rent, - - - -	24	0	0
	<hr/>		
Total expence,	121	14	5

PRODUCE.

	£.	s.	d.
Two years rent of the farm-house lett as a cottage, - - - -	3	0	0
Eighty-six quarters of barley produced on the twenty acres, and sold at 30s.			
a quarter, - - - -	129	0	0
	<hr/>		
	132	0	0
Balance in favour of the farmer at the end of the two years, - - -	10	5	7
	Here		

Here is ten pounds, five shillings and seven pence nett profit to the farmer, although he laid out at once upwards of ten years rent, and notwithstanding the consequent crop was by no means extraordinary. It still remains in the same hands, and, instead of relapsing into its former slovenly state, has constantly been in garden culture, and its produce repeatedly one third part greater than that stated above. In a word, I believe I might very safely venture to affirm, that in the course of the seventeen years it has been under the judicious management of this intelligent farmer the total product for the public use has been at least three or four times as much as during the twenty years immediately before. This has been the consequence of the land having passed from the hands of a little farmer into those of a large one. Similar are the consequences of the like transition in nine instances out of ten. The little farmer, his family and cattle half starved, himself worn to the bones with unavailing labour and perpetual anxiety, can at length pay neither rent, nor rates, nor tithes; his landlord, however humane and compassionate he may be, is reduced to the painful alternative of either turning him out, or of making nothing of his estate. No less than six instances of this kind, besides that already given, have happened in this same Parish (it being an extensive one) within the last thirty or forty years. The rents of these farms were respectively, 22,

16,

16, 30, 24, 21, and 40£ a year; they came into the occupation of the larger neighbouring farmers; and although the rents of three or four of them have been advanced more than one third, yet, their cultivation being proportionably improved, and their consequent produce doubled, tripled, and even *quadrupled*, the farmers still find them sufficiently profitable, and I believe would suffer themselves still further to be raised rather than quit them. These facts might be multiplied ad infinitum. They are but a specimen indeed of what has taken place, more or less, in every part of the kingdom; and whoever thinks that such instances have heightened the price of provisions, much encreased the number, or greatly augmented the miseries and expences, of the Poor, I would advise him to renounce all further pretensions to reason, and take up his future residence in a habitation suited to the state of his understanding.

As to our author's second argument, *that small farmers better manure their land, because they keep proportionably more cattle*, after what has already been said little needs to be added. The number of cattle kept will depend partly on the natural fertility of the soil, and partly on the mode and degree of cultivation. The land and the culture the same, the great farmer will keep as many as the land will fairly bear; if the small one keeps more, they must be badly kept or starved; from

neither of which, it is presumed, any great profit will arise.

But even allowing the small farmer keeps more cattle in proportion than the large one, permit me to ask what kind of cattle they are? Are they not those which are used for the plough? And are not these, generally speaking, *horses*, the most expensive and the least profitable of any? And if more of these are kept, must not fewer of others be the necessary consequence? The ingenious Mr. A. Young, speaking of the division of a country into small farms, says, " I have found
 " from a close inspection, that the number of
 " horses in such a country is treble and quadruple
 " the number found upon large farms; one evident reason for the poverty of their cultivators.
 " There was a farm in this parish (at present my property) of only sixteen acres of land, and yet
 " the man kept two horses; no wonder he failed, notwithstanding the most intense industry. There
 " is another remaining of twenty-eight acres, on which there are three horses kept. A contiguous
 " one of three-hundred-and-fifty has only ten upon it. Those who are advocates for little
 " farms, in order that pigs and poultry may be plentiful, forget the swarms of horses that eat
 " up what would feed myriads of pigs and chickens. I know little farmers that keep two
 " horses,

"horses, yet have not one cow*."

This acute and penetrating writer very justly observes, that there is one method of manuring land almost entirely confined to the great farmer, and that is the folding of sheep, which the small one, from his inconsiderable flock, can never accomplish to any profitable purpose; but which is one of the most valuable modes of improvement that can be adopted, and, I am happy to find, is daily making rapid progress amongst us. In short, that the small farmer will better manure his land, and raise more cattle for the consumption of the table than the great one, is one of the strangest absurdities that ever entered any man's head, as it is manifestly just the reverse with respect to every article, except the trifling ones of eggs and poultry; and that they have not occasioned any extraordinary scarcity even of these is incontestibly evident, because the price of them is not advanced more than the price of other things. Should this ever be the case, they would become worthy the attention of the great farmer; he would produce them in much greater abundance than the little one could, and, perhaps, we should often see (what I think I

Sergeant Rogers 561

* Annals of Agriculture, No. 42, page 516. The ingenious author has here treated the subject of great and small farms in so clear, judicious, and decisive a manner, that I cannot but recommend the perusal of what he has said to all persons who wish to see on what grounds their respective merits depend.

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have

have been told is the case in some parts of France,) single farmers annually bringing up several thousand head of geese and turkeys, ducks and hens and chicken.

But supposing that the consolidation of farms really increases the number of our Poor, and the expence of maintaining them in the very manner this author contends, how far would it answer his purpose in making it an adequate cause of the enormous advance of our Poor's Rates? To have given any determinate force to his argument he should have told us to what degree it has taken place; how many farms, and of what size, that horrible monster, called a great farmer, has swallowed up in the course of the last thirty or forty years; how many poor men he has thrown out of employment, and what has been the advanced price of provisions, in consequence of their having been raised at less expence.

Judging from my own observation, and the testimony of those I have consulted on this subject, not more on an average, if so many as, four or five small farms in each parish, from 10, 20 to 30 £ a year, within the compass of time now mentioned, have been joined to large ones. This of course has diminished the number of farmers in the whole kingdom forty or fifty thousand, and increased the labouring families nearly in the same proportion.

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These families would stand the same chance for a maintenance with the rest of the same denomination; for, supposing (what we have seen is not true), that the labours of husbandry are *lessened*, the rising families must have been gradually converted into manufacturers. Now, our total number of labourers forty years ago was about five millions, the Poor out of which cost the kingdom annually about a million sterling; to these, according to the argument, have since been added a hundredth part more, and consequently about ten thousand a year additional expence, or a hundredth part of the increase which has actually taken place.

But, says this author, the consolidation of farms has not only increased the rates, by increasing the number of our Poor, but by likewise increasing the price of provisions. Now, according to the above estimates, about a hundred, or a hundred and fifty acres of small farms in every parish have been absorbed by the larger ones, that is, probably, about a thirtieth part of the whole, which, supposing it absolutely *annihilated*, could have influenced the price of provisions in very little higher proportion, except in the articles of eggs, chicken, &c. which, I presume, have never been of any great consequence to the Poor. The produce of these engrossed farms, in other things, cannot have been greatly diminished, even on our author's own reasoning, to allow the great farmer his sup-

posed advantages, at most, perhaps, not a sixth or seventh part; so that its total influence in the view before us, would be in the ratio of about one to two hundred. The result, therefore, of the whole of this supposed primary, and almost sole cause of the great advance of our Poor's Rates, would account for a little more than a seventieth part of it, even allowing the principles of our author's reasoning in their utmost extent, which, however, we have seen are just the reverse of the truth.

But I will now even grant our author, that the engrossing of farms, if not the *immediate*, has been the *eventual* cause of a treble increase of Poor, to what can be pretended upon his view of the matter; and yet, I am not afraid to maintain, that this, instead of augmenting our Poor's Rates, has prevented their greater advance.

It is to large and engrossing farmers, together with the gentlemen * occasionally turning their
attention

* Among the gentlemen who have turned their attention to the improvements of agriculture, and the skilful management of country business, the Duke of Grafton stands very highly distinguished. Being upon a little tour last summer through the counties of Bucks, Bedford, and Northampton, I was favoured with a sight of his Grace's farm at Wakefield Lodge. It consists, I think, of about three hundred acres of land, judiciously divided into arable and pasture; the
whole

attention to agriculture, that we owe the vast improvements in the cultivation of our lands, which have

whole is already in a high state of culture, and evidently still advancing. The fields and pastures, at very considerable expence, have been reduced to the best form and size; barns, and other buildings, are admirably disposed and arranged in different parts, for the reception of the several products, or for the sheltering and foddering the several kinds of cattle during the winter months. And never creatures better deserved such provident care; for whether sheep, cows, oxen, &c. they are all as fine and beautiful of their respective sorts, as the most curious would wish to see.—How much better is it for a nobleman thus himself to raise on a part of his estate the greatest possible produce for the service of the country at large, and to exhibit a specimen of excellent farming to the neighbourhood around, than, agreeable to the advice of the writer before us, to let this same land to half a score little farmers, and suffer them to sink, (as unassisted they probably would do,) into that wretched condition described above, at the hazard too of the land falling into the most slovenly and impoverished state! It would not have been easy for even his Grace to prevent these natural consequences of adopting such a plan. His well known humanity, and kind consideration for the advantage of his inferiors, would, I am confident, have done all that could have been done.—Though somewhat foreign to my subject, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of mentioning the circumstance, upon which my confidence of this is founded, and which, I confess, very forcibly struck me. His Grace has an estate in this neighbourhood of, I believe, upwards of ten thousand a year, which, though he lets, if I am not mistaken, without granting leases, (in general, the worst of all possible tenures), yet, I was repeatedly assured by farmers in different parts of the counties of Bucks and Northampton,

that

have taken place within the last 30 or 40 years, and that the produce of them in corn, grass, cattle, and every thing essential to the maintenance and support of society, has been augmented at least one fourth, if not a third. The engrossing of farms has encreased our labourers two hundred and fifty thousand; by that diminution of the number of farmers it has occasioned; it has, perhaps, made an equal addition by the higher culture of the ground, and, not improbably, produced a still greater increase by the support it has afforded to our manufactures. Yet, at the same time, so has it prevented the augmentation of the price of provisions, by its abridgements and facilitations of labour, and by its enlarged produce, that it has not, perhaps, one farthing advanced the expence of maintaining our multiplied Poor.

It has often been observed, that since the bounty on the exportation of wheat has taken place, there

that such is the general persuasion, both of his skill in the real value of land, and of his humane attention to the comfort and happiness of all dependent on him, that none but are eager to become his tenants; none but esteem it a privilege, and are happy to leave the rent and other terms to be settled by himself. This is surely not less to the honour of his Grace's judgment and humanity, than it would be to that of the wisdom and benevolence of a despotic Prince, that his subjects preferred the direction of his sole will and pleasure, to the living under the freest government, with all the advantages of written laws, to which they themselves had given their assent.

has been at once a greater uniformity in the price of it, and that that price upon an average has been lower. Both these effects have been ascribed to this regulation, and, I confess, I thought very justly so, till I read *Dr. Smith's Wealth of Nations*, which has convinced me that the idea is totally groundless, and that this bounty, instead of having been of the supposed advantage, has been extremely pernicious in almost every possible view.

It is incontestibly clear that it cannot have produced the effects ascribed to it, because the same effects have appeared in France as well as in England, where no such bounties have been given, but, on the contrary, during the much greater part of the time, the strictest prohibitions have been laid, that no wheat at all should be exported.

As the matter is evident from this plain illustration of fact, it is no less so from speculation and theory, or, rather, from the very nature of things. When wheat is below a certain price, a bounty of five shillings a quarter is given by government on its exportation, which is a direct tax upon the community at large; and the quantity of wheat annually exported during the fourteen years, beginning with the year 1771, being a hundred thousand quarters, this tax amounted to twenty thousand *per annum* through that whole period. But
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this tax was a mere trifle to what it further occasioned: the five shillings a quarter bounty upon what went abroad, must inevitably have raised the price of that which staid at home four shillings a quarter likewise. And as there are annually consumed in England and Wales at least seven millions of quarters, hence must have arisen a tax upon the kingdom of one million two hundred thousand a year, and this too without any great final benefit to either landlord or farmer; for this tax, like all other taxes, must have operated to increase the price of manufactures, and every domestic necessary of life. Nay, even this, great as it is, is not all: as the bounty increased the price in plentiful years, so it increased the importation in scarce ones; thus augmenting the public burden both ways, and at the same time depriving the farmer of the benefit he would otherwise have received, from laying up his corn in his granaries during the seasons of plenty.

But this bounty, it is said, is an encouragement to agriculture, because it assures the farmer of a market for his corn, and that hence he exerts himself with diligence and activity, to improve his land and increase his produce. No doubt the certainty of a ready sale for his crop, is the secret principle which animates the farmer, and has given rise to most of our agricultural improvements. But whence this assurance arises, he never troubles

bles his head. He only knows that grow as much grain as he will, he can always advantageously dispose of it. Whether this be owing to the bounty granted by government, or any other cause, it is the same to him. But that it cannot have arisen from the bounty is incontestibly evident from the trifling exportation that bounty has occasioned. In the fourteen years above referred to, there were, upon an average, nearly a million of quarters of wheat annually *imported* more than *exported*.

Upon the whole, therefore, the bounty has neither diminished the average price of corn, caused a greater uniformity in its price, nor afforded encouragement to agriculture; but, on the contrary, as far as it has operated at all, its operation, we have seen, has been extremely pernicious.—The real fact is this; our increased wealth, our increased manufactures, and our increased population, have occasioned an increased demand for corn; this increased demand has been a constant spur to the improvements of agriculture; the improvements of agriculture have been chiefly accomplished by the large engrossing farmer, and the gentleman who has turned his thoughts that way; the same improvements have rendered our crops less dependent upon the variety of seasons, effected a greater uniformity in the product, and, of course, a greater uniformity in the price, as well as a lower average of it. And this brings us back to the point from

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which we digressed, namely, that though the enlargement and consolidation of farms *, have in
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* Should we carry back our view to the first origin of agriculture, we should see perhaps almost as many farmers as there were families, each cultivating his little spot (like Adam dressing and tilling the garden of Eden) for his own immediate support; each likewise, not improbably, fabricating his own implements of husbandry, and his own articles of clothing. But things could not long remain in this state. It must soon have been discovered that implements of husbandry and articles of clothing might be much better made by persons whose time was entirely applied to that purpose. Hence the smith, the carpenter, the wheel-wright, the comber, the weaver, the taylor. From this moment an enlargement of farms takes place. For the farmer must now not only produce sufficient for the maintenance of himself and family, but for these several artists and manufacturers. If this society be content with the mutual supply of the bare coarse necessities of life, matters will remain nearly in the same condition. But some of the farmers, and some of the artists, by superior ingenuity, industry, and care, or by greater good fortune, will unavoidably rise above their neighbours, and by degrees become independent of the mere business of farming, or the labours of the mechanic. Hence the proportion of the farmers to the rest of the society is still farther diminished, and a new augmentation of farms becomes necessary. This cannot always be effected without the consolidation, or the joining two or more together. As the accumulation of riches in the hands of individuals increases, a taste for luxury increases likewise, not only in eating and drinking, but in dress, furniture, and equipage. Artists, mechanics, manufacturers, are multiplied; towns are formed, and magnificent buildings are erected; connections or competitions with foreign states arise; hence trade and
commerce,

three different ways increased the proportion of labourers (i. e.) by a diminution of the number of farmers, by the higher culture of our land, and by the support and nourishment it has afforded to our manufactures ; yet, at the same time, so has it prevented the augmentation of the price of corn and other provisions, that it probably has not at all advanced the expence of maintaining our multiplied Poor.

As to the other part of the argument, the not allowing a proper quantity of land to cottages, so little change has taken place in this respect, that it scarcely deserves our notice. Those which have four or five acres belonging to them, and which our author talks so much about, are more properly

commerce, soldiers, sailors, garrisons and fortifications, armies, ships of war, and ships of merchandize, and all the innumerable trains connected with them. Hence the improvements of agriculture, and the still farther enlargement and engrossing of farms to supply this increased demand of provisions. This is the natural course of things; this is the course in which almost every improving country in Europe has proceeded; but none perhaps more rapidly than Great Britain, as none has more rapidly augmented its trade and manufactures, its commerce and its wealth. Whoever, therefore, complains of the enlargement and engrossing of farms, complains of the incontestible proof of our increased riches and prosperity; whoever would put a stop to the practice, would put a stop likewise to our wealth, our population, and every improvement.

small farms than *cottages*, and their consequence has been sufficiently attended to under that head. And as to cottages, more strictly and properly so called, with a piece of ground adjoining sufficient to produce garden stuff for the immediate use of the family, as far as my observation has extended, the old ones continue much as they were heretofore, those only excepted where one tenement has been converted into two, which having been chiefly the case with what were formerly small farms, there is still, for the most part, as much garden ground for each as a cottage ought to have; and where entirely new ones have been erected, an equal, if not greater, quantity has generally been allotted. If, therefore, the fact has any where really taken place, and the reasoning concerning it be most fully allowed, the application is of so narrow and confined extent, that it merits no attention in the argument before us.

P A R T II.

S E C T. I.

The great and real Cause of the increased Proportion of our Poor, as well as of the increased Expence of maintaining them, is, that the Price of Labour has not advanced so much as the Price of Provisions.

IN the preceding pages we have taken a cursory view of the causes to which the rapid increase of our Poor Rates has been imputed; and we have seen, I presume, that none of them can strictly and properly be considered as any cause at all, or, at most, by no means adequate to the effect produced.

I will now state what appears to me alone sufficient to have raised the complained of expences much higher than they have yet risen, in order to place the Poor in a situation equally comfortable with that they possessed forty or fifty years ago. This is no other than that *the price of labour has not advanced in proportion to the advance in the price of provisions.*

But before I endeavour to evince the full efficacy of this, it is necessary to obviate an objection which
has

has often been urged upon this head, which is, that high wages encourage idleness, and occasion drinking and profligacy; for that the workmen who are best paid are the poorest, and their families soonest become burdensome to parishes. Now this is nothing to the present purpose, for want of the requisite distinctions. There are doubtless individual persons who would spend all their earnings, were they ever so great; and, indeed, the more they could earn in a short time, the more profligate, drunken, and worthless would they become. There are also perhaps bodies of manufacturers, who working together in one society or company, the higher their wages, the stronger would be their temptations to drinking, the sooner would they sink into habits of sottishness, and themselves be the sooner clothed with poverty and rags. And yet even this is far from being universally the case. In some of our most considerable manufacturing towns, Birmingham in particular, though the wages of the workmen is very considerable, the Poor are in a very comfortable condition, live well, and the town at large is, in consequence, one of the healthiest, if not the most healthy, of its size, which is to be found in the kingdom. But whatever force is allowed the objection in particular situations, it is by no means applicable to the bulk of the Poor, taken in town and country promiscuously. In this general collective view, the temptations and allurements to irregular conduct, and to social intemperate

perate drinking, are neither so frequent, nor so immediate and powerful. But even admitting them to be at once equally urgent, and to return with no less frequency, they would still fail of universal operation. The Poor are neither brutes nor fools. They have the same understanding, the same acuteness of penetration, and they use, as far as their ideas extend, the same consequential reasoning as their superiours. If capable then, by assiduous application, of earning something more than is adequate to their immediate necessities, will they work only three or four days in the week, and spend the rest in idleness and riot, in drunkenness and debauchery? Give them common sense, allow them the common feelings and sentiments of men, with the views and prospects natural to the human mind, and they certainly will not. They are not without sensibility of the comforts and conveniences of life; the hopes of securing them will be a perpetual stimulus for making provision for future contingencies; for sickness and disease; for the solace of age and infirmity, or for the assistance of a rising family. In North America, before the late revolt, country labour received double the wages given with us; at the same time the necessaries of life were vastly cheaper. Did this make the labourers idle? Did it produce a general scene of lazy and riotous profligacy? Just the contrary. It was the keenest spur to the most vigorous industry. It removed every temptation to illicit intercourse between the sexes,

sexes. It gave every incitement to early marriage. Early marriage of course took place; a numerous offspring followed, and every additional child was additional wealth. The widow, with a large family of young children around her, instead of sinking into despondency, overwhelmed with immediate distress and misery, was considered as possessed of ample fortune, and it was her own fault if she formed not again the matrimonial bond. Those parties, mean time, whose union was less prolific, soon laid up an independent competence, which rendered the evening of life serene and pleasant:

O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona nōssent.

High wages then, whatever pernicious influence they may have upon the minds of a few individuals, are to the bulk of poor men the most powerful incitement to diligent and regular industry, inasmuch as they open to them the pleasing prospect of decent competence, and final repose from toil and fatigue.

Having made these necessary preliminary observations, let us now proceed to establish our main point, that the real cause of the greatly increased expences of maintaining the Poor has been, *that the advance in the price of labour has not been equal to the advance in the price of provisions.* In order to settle this matter, it is previously requisite

to know the actual increase of these expences, the increase in the price of labour, and the present and increased number of our Poor. None of these particulars can, perhaps, be ascertained with perfect precision. They may, however, with that degree of correctness which subjects of this nature generally admit of; and which therefore may be considered as fully satisfactory.

With regard to the first article, the actual increase of the expences of maintaining the Poor, we have no very certain data, but a few years back. Two accounts have been laid before Parliament, one in the year 1776, the other in the year 1786, which may afford us some tolerable direction. The former is contained in an abstract of the medium annual expences of maintaining the Poor of this kingdom during the three years ending at Easter, 1776, and which amounted to £1,529,780 0s. 1d.

The latter is given in the Report from the Committee appointed to inspect and consider the returns made by the overseers of the Poor relative to the state of the Poor, and, on an average of the three years ending at Easter 1785, is 2,004,238l. 5s. 11d.

The Committee, upon comparing these two returns, apprise the House of Commons, that the medium annual increase of expences in nine years,

commencing at Easter, 1776, and ending at Easter, 1685, amounts to 474,458 *l.* 5*s.* 10*d.* That is, as seems inevitably to follow, and as I believe the general conclusion, the expences of maintaining the Poor of this kingdom, have, during the nine years now specified, been gradually and annually increasing at the rate of more than 50,000 *l.* a year; and that this is the ratio in which it is still advancing, if not even greater. But nothing, in every view, can be more fallacious.

In order to form a true judgment of the real and gradual advance of the expences in question, a comparison must be made between two periods in circumstances perfectly similar. But scarcely any thing can be more the reverse of each other, in almost every respect, than the two periods to which the Committee have directed our attention. The former was during the height of a flourishing peace, when trade and commerce, and manufactures, and agriculture were boldly advancing, and the mechanic and the husbandman were busily and fully employed; nor were either of them checked by any peculiar severity of seasons; consequently the condition of the Poor must have been comparatively comfortable, and the expences of maintaining them proportionably light. The latter, in every particular, how directly contrary! It was soon after the termination of an expensive, unprosperous war, which must unavoidably have given a temporary

temporary obstruction to all these advantages; must have thrown many persons out of employment, encreased the number of our Poor, greatly augmented, by additional taxes, the price of provisions, and, what particularly enhanced these evils, it consisted of two or three such severe winters as have scarcely happened, in immediate succession, since the commencement of the present century. All these circumstances must have multiplied the difficulties and aggravated the miseries of the Poor. The expence of maintaining them may have been vastly increased without suggesting the idea of any such great and regular advance as seems to be the general apprehension. The last particular alone, the uncommon severity of two or three winters directly following each other, probably made a difference of at least a hundred thousand a year. This is not unlikely even from the returns as they stand in the Appendix to the Report of the Committee. The Committee, indeed, have not thought proper to give us the nett expence paid for the Poor in each of the years 1783-4 and 5 (as it surely would have been proper to have done for the more distinct information of the house and of the public at large) but they have however stated the sums raised by assessment, which stand as follows*.

In

* REMARKS of the COMMITTEE.

The Committee further observe, “ that they have hopes
“ of considerably reducing the expences of entertainments at

			£.	s.	d.
In 1783,	-	-	2,132,486	12	2
—1784	-	-	2,185,889	7	8
—1785	-	-	2,184,984	18	11

The

“ the parochial meetings of officers, amounting to 11,713*l.*” This is a most important intimation indeed! For this same 11,713*l.* amounts to the enormous sum of almost 20*s.* to each parish or township; but we are encouraged to hope that there will be so great a reduction of it, that these prodigals of parish officers, instead of spending the shameful sum of 6*d.* a piece at each meeting, will, for the future spend only 3*d.* or a groat, or, better still, instead of the parish at large bearing the heavy burden, it will fall on the few individuals who take the trouble of transacting the business.

NUMBER of PAUPERS.

The Committee also remark, that “ from the manner in which the returns are made from most of the parishes, nothing can be collected to afford any useful information respecting the number of Poor who received constant, and who received occasional relief.” From the indefinite directions given, it must have been almost miraculous if better intelligence had been communicated. I know but one parish, within the compass of my present recollection, which made a return in answer to this particular that could be at all useful, and that was done in consequence of the judicious reasoning of a single farmer on the subject.

An anonymous writer in a late publication of, *A Collection of Pamphlets relating to the Poor*, has endeavoured to compute the number of persons in this kingdom which receive parochial assistance. Going upon a fundamental misapprehension given by the Committee who inspected the returns of 1776, he

The winter of 1783 was rather severe, but those of 1784 and 1785 were vastly more so; and we

he makes them not half so many as they really are: This, if necessary, I could easily, I think, demonstrate. But what is of more consequence, to myself at least, is to correct a mistake of my own. This writer has done me the honour to make use of my calculation of the number of people in this kingdom as deducible from the returns of houses to the Tax Office; I take the present opportunity, indeed I think it absolutely incumbent upon me, in order to prevent future errors, to acknowledge that that calculation of mine deserves no credit; it being founded on an entire misconception of the manner in which the district and county surveyors make their collective returns of cottages. This mistake seems not only to have escaped the notice of the public in general, but even the acute penetration of Dr. Price himself. What he intimates to be my mistake on this head is merely his own misapprehension; and I must also take the liberty to observe, that the other mistakes he imputes to me have no existence but in his own imagination. This I will satisfactorily evince, should I ever again publish on the general subject of the population of this kingdom, for which I have by me very ample materials. I mean no insinuation to the Doctor's disadvantage. For though I have ventured, on good grounds, to differ from him respecting this last article, and although I am not so fortunate as to adopt all his political, or all his theological tenets, I still look upon him with high veneration as a great and good man. For this I have sufficient authority in his Essay on Morals, his Essays on Miracles, Providence, and Prayer, his elaborate and valuable Treatise on Reversionary Payments, and his late manly and eloquent Sermons; these will carry down his name with distinguished honour to posterity, when mine, and that of thousands of vastly my superiours, will be utterly forgotten.

accordingly

accordingly find the expences of them encreased considerably above 50,000 *l.* It is not improbable, on the very face of it, therefore, that the years immediately before, as well as those immediately after, being each comparatively mild seasons, were, from this cause alone, less expensive by more than a hundred thousand pounds. That I might not however rely on mere speculation, even though thus extremely plausible, I have collected the medium annual expence of maintaining the Poor in forty-two parishes, of very considerable extent, in the counties of Kent, Essex, and Suffolk, for the two years immediately preceding those returned to Parliament, for these three years themselves, and for the two years directly subsequent, and they appear as follows.

	<i>£.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
The medium of 1781 and 1782,	18,588	7	10
—————1783-4-and 5	20,264	10	5
—————1786-and 7	18,050	14	2

Here it appears that the annual average expences of these forty-two parishes during the three years returned to Parliament were about a twelfth part greater than the average of the two years immediately before, and about a ninth part greater than the average of the two years immediately following. If we suppose there has been a proportionable difference throuhout the kingdom, and,

(as

(as these parishes were taken at random, and without any previous motive for selection whatever) there appears no reason to suppose the contrary, the expences of the parliamentary period were above one hundred-and-sixty thousand a year more than that immediately before it, and nearly two hundred-and-twenty-thousand more than that immediately after. Hence arise two very pleasing conclusions, 1st. That the expence of maintaining the Poor are at present actually decreasing; and that, 2dly, Properly speaking, they have been encreased only about 250,000*l.* in the course of eleven years, instead of upwards of 474,000*l.* in nine years, as the Committee have apprised the House of Commons; and, consequently, that those alarms on this subject which have been so zealously spread amongst us, to our no small terror and affright, as if we were hurrying fast to ruin and destruction, are mere childish panics. For an increase of 250,000*l.* a year, in the course of eleven years, considering the events which have taken place in that compass of time, is a mere trifle to what might have been expected. An expensive war brought an additional debt of more than a hundred million. This occasioned a variety of taxes, some of which have fallen upon what the present state of things renders, even to the lowest of our people, the immediate necessaries of life, such as soap, leather, candles, &c. and increased their price one fifth; wheat, mean time, in the disadvantageous manner in which it generally comes to the poor labourer,

labourer, has been almost six shillings a bushel, malt above four shillings and sixpence, butter and cheese have risen three halfpence a pound, meat a penny. Twelve years ago our labouring Poor were scarcely six millions; they are now six millions and a quarter*. Suppose each individual of them consumes a quarter of wheat in a year, which is rather below the fact, and the sum expended in their bread-corn alone is annually upwards of fourteen millions sterling. Allow that leather, soap, candles, meat, beer, butter, cheese, after making every abatement for those who use but very little of these, cost one-fourth part more; and, admitting, that all these articles taken together are advanced only one-fifth in their price, and we have an addition of seven hundred thousand a year for the maintenance of our labouring Poor, without noticing the increase in their numbers which has taken place, as just now stated. What advantage have they had to enable them to bear this augmented burden? What advance within the last ten or twelve years, has been made in their wages? Very little, indeed! In their daily labour, nothing at all, either in husbandry or manufactures. In some branches of the latter, by the iniquitous, oppressive practices of those who have the direction of them, they are at this moment considerably lower. The only advantage they enjoy more than they did a few years ago, is in

* I include the wives and children.

Piece-Work, a custom, to the mutual *present* benefit of master and labourer, more and more adopted. But it is to be observed that this is chiefly confined to particular kinds of work, to particular seasons of the year, and that the greatest emolument of it is to persons of peculiar dexterity and ability; nor should it be forgotten, that whilst it augments the wages of the workmen, it shortens the duration both of their lives and of their capacity for labour *. So that the final advantage of this expedient to the community at large, may, perhaps, be doubted; but, at most, it can scarcely more than counterbalance the increase of three or four hundred thousand in the numbers of the Poor, which we have just observed has taken place within the period under our present consideration. After, therefore, every reasonable deduction made, we may fairly conclude, that the additional expence of maintaining the labouring families of this kingdom, in only the same degree of comfort they were in ten or twelve years ago, cannot be less than seven hundred thousand a year; two hundred and fifty thousand of these only we have seen are now paid by the middle and higher ranks, the rest is squeezed out of the flesh, and blood, and bones of the Poor.

* Dr. Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, says, that those London carpenters who work by the piece, seldom remain in their full vigour above eight years.

The increase of our Rates then within the last ten or twelve years, is easily and fully accounted for, without the supposition of a *wretched system of Poor Laws, or a defective execution of them; without having recourse to the folly, and waste, and extravagance of Parish Officers; the engrossing of Farms; the number of Ale houses; the increased vice and profligacy of the Poor; or the like fanciful and imaginary causes, which have been so repeatedly rung in our ears, from one end of the kingdom to the other.*

If we carry our researches thirty years further backwards, the matter, if possible, is still more *manifest*. What sum was annually raised about the commencement of this period, we have no certain well authenticated documents to inform us. Mr. Henry Fielding, in a very spirited pamphlet published in the year 1753, tells us, I do not recollect upon what authority, that it was then about a million sterling per annum. This being admitted, from that time to the parliamentary return in the year 1776 its annual amount was increased above 500,000 *l.* Now, in the course of this interval, there was not only a vast increase in the price of provisions in general, occasioned, partly by a prodigious accession of national wealth, which diminished the value of money; partly, and in a much higher degree, by the load of taxes arising from an expensive war; but
the

the average price of wheat, which from 1746 to 1765 was only thirty-two shillings a quarter, was, almost from that time to the year 1776, above forty-five, which circumstance alone, agreeably to principles already laid down, must have increased the annual expence of living to the Poor nearly four millions, whilst that caused by the advanced price of other provisions could scarcely be less than a million more.

There was nothing to answer this enormous increase in the expence of living, but the increase in the price of labour, which, upon an average, as appears by information now before me, from various parts of the kingdom, was very little, if any thing, more than two-pence in the shilling*, except

* In this county and neighbourhood the advance is scarcely so much as two-pence in the shilling by the day. Mr. A. Young tells me, that in his part of Suffolk day-work has risen from ten pence to one shilling and two-pence in the winter. In harvest, the advance has been from ten shillings a week to twelve shillings. A correspondent from the southern parts of the kingdom observes, that the increase in their counties is nearly as follows :

		In 1737.—1787.	
Agriculture,	{ Labourers out of doors in the country —	{ 10d.—12d. a day.	
	{ Threshers —	{ 9 —12	
	{ Labourers out of doors near great towns	{ 16 —16	

except only the money earnt by *piece-work*, which ten or twelve years ago was not nearly so general as at present. This could not have discharged above three millions of the annually increased expence. Of the remaining two millions, one-fourth only was paid by the public, and the want of the rest, an entire million and a half, gradually sunk the Poor deeper and deeper in the gulphs of poverty and wretchedness.

The cause of the rapid increase of the Poor's Rates, both within the last ten or twelve years, and the thirty immediately preceding them, most clearly, and certainly is the greater advance in the price of provisions than in the price of labour*.

Many

		1737.	1787.
Cloth manu- facture,	{ Scriblers	—	14d.—15d. a day.
	{ Shearmen	—	15 — 18
	{ Weaver's wages raised		
	{ about 2d. per day in the coarse trade, and nothing at all in the superfine.		
	{ Women spinners	—	6 — 7

Accounts from other quarters very well agree with these, and from the whole it is clear that the above estimate is by no means too low.

* Mr. Townsend, in his Dissertation on the Poor Laws, p. 10, 11, second edition, says, " That the advance of our rates, and the distresses of the Poor, cannot have been owing to the increased price of corn, because, on an average of the 60 years which terminated the last century, it was dearer than during the first 60 years of the present, and nearly as dear as it has been since the end of these 60 years ;

Many inferior causes, have, doubtless, contributed something to the same general effect; but all those together are mere trifles to this great and leading one, which, alone, will account for the increased expences of supporting the Poor, as well as their increased number, and their increased distress.

The same general effects, we have already observed, have appeared in other kingdoms of Europe; and perhaps it would be no difficult matter to trace the operation of the same cause in each. In France, as we saw in the beginning of these papers, the matter is incontestible, and, as the

“ years; nor can it have arisen from the high price of leather, soap, candles, and other small articles needful in a family, because the price of labour has been raised within a century in the proportion of four to six, and because where the price of labour is highest, and provisions cheapest, there the Poor Rates have been most exorbitant.”

After what I have said above, I shall not stay to dispute these assertions, or analyze this reasoning, but only ask these plain questions, Are not the expences of living increased in the same proportion to the Poor as to the Rich? Nay, have not the former some increased disadvantages peculiar to themselves? And yet, can the latter now make as genteel or decent a figure upon 300 *l.* a year as they might have done upon 200 a century, or even 50 years ago? If they cannot, I leave Mr. T. in full undisturbed possession of his facts, only reminding him, that an English labourer must have much more philosophy than his superiors, before he can live like a Scotch Highlander, and that his argument receives but little force from the instance of a people, whose women, from the wretched penury they are suffered to live in, can bring up but one child out of twenty.

French very strongly exprefs it, *saute aux yeux*. With refpect to our own country, were we to carry our refearches back through the whole of the prefent century, and into the paff, I make no doubt we fhould fee the fame evils regularly flowing from the fame fource. What alone renders this probable, at leaft, is, that our complaints of the increafe of our rates have generally been loudeft, when the caufe now mentioned has been moft clear and manifef; nay, when, perhaps, the exceffive price of bread-corn alone muft have not only raifed our parochial expences to the complained of height, but occafioned prodigious additional hardships. It was between the years 1670 and 1690, that Lord Chief Juftice Hales, Sir Jofeph Child, Mr. Thomas Firmin, &c. lamented the growing burden of our Poor, and afcribed it partly to their increafed profligacy, partly to the want of proper employment, partly to the deficiency of our laws, or their imperfect execution; in fhort, to every caufe but the true one, which one would have thought muft not only have ftruck thefe men of diftinguifhed penetration, but have been obvious to every man of common fenfe, namely, the exceffive price of bread-corn, which for almoft twenty years together, was upwards of fix fhillings a bufhel. This, alone, muft have occafioned an additional expence to the whole body of labourers in this kingdom, of more than five times as much as the public paid for their maintenance.

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In the course of the next eight or ten years the House of Commons turned their attention to this subject, and Mr. Locke, Mr. Cary, and others, employed their researches to account for that load, which, in the general apprehension, was sinking us into ruin, and, absurd like their predecessors, they again imputed it to the vice and wickedness of the lower classes of our people. The price of wheat mean time, for nine years in succession, was upwards of seven shillings a bushel. Was it possible that any wages our labourers then received could enable them to purchase it, and secure them from the most grinding hardships? The three or four years immediately following, the price of corn was moderate, and we hear few, if any, complaints on this head.

In 1704 corn again rose to almost six shillings a bushel, and out steps Mr. Daniel Defoe, and addresses the Knights, Citizens, and Burgeesses, in Parliament assembled, and displays much brilliancy of genius, and some plausibility of argument, upon the idleness and vices of the Poor, and makes his Proposals for their better regulation and employment.

In the year 1735 wheat was between five and six shillings a bushel; and Mr. Hay, M. P. published Remarks on the Laws relating to the Poor, with his Scheme for their better Relief and Employment.

In

In 1752 and 1753 wheat was again between five and six shillings a bushel; and Mr. Alcock makes *Observations on the Defect of our Poor Laws, and on the Causes and Consequences of the great Encrease and Burden of the Poor, with Proposals for redressing these Grievances.* Lord Hillsborough and Sir Richard Lloyd repeat these complaints, and bring forward their respective Plans of Reformation; and Mr. H. Fielding likewise offers his Project of effectual Provision for the Poor, for amending their Morals, and for rendering them *useful Members of Society*; as if it was not to their usefulness we owe all that we enjoy.

In 1756, 1757, and 1758, wheat was almost seven shillings a bushel: the cries of the Poor were importunate, and publications, complaints, and schemes, again were numerous. Four years after this, in immediate succession, corn was cheap, and all was still and silent; the lower classes of people, it seems, were not quite so wicked and profligate; but in 1763 wheat was forty-five shillings a quarter, and the Rev. Mr. Cooper, M. A. favours us with *Definitions and Axioms relative to Charity, Charitable Institutions, and the Poor Laws.* All these gentlemen doubtless meant well, and, perhaps, did considerable good; they certainly displayed much goodness of heart, much ingenuity and keenness of penetration; nor do I blame them for publishing when most likely to procure attention; I only wonder

wonder they so little adverted to the manifest cause of the evils complained of, and that they spent so much time in framing schemes to remove what human wisdom never can remove or prevent; and which can only, from time to time, be somewhat alleviated by the more plentiful assistance of those who are able to afford it, either by voluntary donations, or forced contribution.

Upon the whole, there is a long and uniform chain of evidence to establish our main point, that the increasing miseries and expences of the Poor have been owing to the greater advance in the price of provisions, either gradual, or sudden and temporary, than in the price of labour.

S E C T. II.

A Conclusion, which may seem naturally to arise from the Doctrine of the foregoing Section, obviated.

It may not here be improper to obviate a conclusion, which, at first sight, may seem deducible from the doctrine we have endeavoured to establish; namely, If the price of provisions has increased faster than the price of labour, it is a clear evidence of the declining prosperity of the kingdom, and a certain indication of approaching ruin. For when a nation is in a progressive state, is not the demand

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for,

for, and, consequently, the price of labour continually advancing likewise, even faster than the price of provisions? And, in its declining condition, does not the reverse commonly take place? This, it must be acknowledged, is very generally true. It is true, however, only under certain restrictions, and while other things remain nearly the same. There may be a constant, and greatly increasing demand for labour; and yet, such may be the increase of people, and such the abridgment and facilitation of labour itself, that the price of it may make very slow, if any advances at all. This, in a great measure, seems to have been the case with us. Manufactures and agriculture, within the last thirty or forty years, have flourished and increased to a most astonishing degree, insomuch that it would be far from extravagant to assert that the work done in the former, within the period now mentioned, is more than tripled, and, in the latter, nearly doubled; at the same time, so great has been the increase of our people, such the abridgment and facilitation of the work itself, partly from the greater dexterity of the workmen, in consequence of the division and simplification of their labours, still more from the invention of machines, and various ingenious contrivances, that the price of the workmanship has been little advanced; there being generally hands in abundance to perform it, and the master having, as it were, the choice of whom he shall employ. Hence the flourishing state of

our trade, and the vast extent and improvement of our husbandry; hence the general prosperity of the middle ranks, and hence the enormous wealth of a few individuals of originally large capitals; but hence likewise the comparative lowness of wages, and the increasing poverty and wretchedness of our labouring classes. What therefore has been the frequent subject of lamentation, as the harbinger of national ruin, has been the real source of our riches and grandeur.

There is, indeed, I cannot help thinking, something peculiarly ungenerous, in our complaints of the burdensomeness of our Poor. Within the last forty years the rent of our houses and land are increased eight or ten millions; the wealth of our farmers and tradesmen is augmented in similar proportion; that of our merchants and leading manufacturers in a degree infinitely greater. And shall we grudge to allow of this abundance two millions a year towards the support of those from the labour of whose hands and the sweat of whose brows we have derived the whole? Shall we grind their faces, and squeeze them to death, and then have the cruel absurdity of ascribing their fate to their increasing vice and profligacy? Raise their wages in proportion to their increased expence of living, or give them provisions as they had them forty years ago. Give them wheat at 4s. a bushel, malt at 2s. 6d. butter at 5d. or 6d. a pound, meat

and cheese at 3^d. soap, candles, &c. at 5^d. : Do this, and we need no new code of laws, nor better execution of the old ones; the two millions, so loudly bewailed, soon would diminish; our labourers would once again be comfortably fed, and decently clothed; their dirt and their filth would be washed away; their rags and their nakedness would no longer offend our sight; in perfect neatness once more would they crowd our places of worship, and that degree of vice and wickedness which we ourselves have occasioned would gradually depart. But as neither of these is to be expected; as neither of these, in the present state of things, can perhaps be really or easily accomplished; let us contemplate, as we at first proposed, a few of the leading parts of some of the principal of the modern schemes for reducing the expences of the Poor, and rendering their condition more easy and comfortable.

END OF THE SECOND PART.

PART

P A R T III.

A slight Examination of some of the leading Parts of the principal of our modern Schemes for the better Relief and Management of the Poor.

S E C T. I.

Houses of Industry.—Their Reduction of Expence.

OF those who have employed their thoughts in framing schemes for the better relief and employment of the Poor, Mr. Gilbert makes a very distinguished figure. I do not intend to enter into a minute examination of his very extensive and complicated plan, but shall chiefly confine myself to what seems to form a very considerable, and indeed principal part of it; namely, the incorporation of parishes, for erecting what are called Houses of Industry, for the joint reception, maintenance, and employment of their Poor.

Two very important points to be aimed at in any undertaking relative to the subject before us, are the reduction of expence, and the preservation of health. Let us impartially enquire how far

Houses

Houses of Industry recommend themselves under each of these heads respectively.

Mr. Gilbert, in order to prove their prodigious advantages towards the reduction of expence, tells us that the incorporated hundreds of Clavering and Loddon, consisting of 41 parishes, East and West Flegg of 20, and Saunditch and Mitford of 50, containing in all 111 parishes, in the county of Norfolk, according to the return made to Parliament in 1776, were at the expence of about 9000 *l.* a year in maintaining their Poor; but that this sum, on a medium of the years 1783, 1784, and 1785, was reduced to about 8000 *l.* He likewise informs us that 41 *unincorporated* parishes, the nearest adjacent to these incorporations respectively, increased their expences in the same compass of time from 4299 to 5154 *l.* That is, the 111 *incorporated* parishes reduced their expences in the interval of eight or ten years in nearly the ratio of 100 to 90; while the 41 *unincorporated* ones increased theirs almost in the proportion of 100 to 120. "This," says Mr. Gilbert, "is demonstration of the comparative merit of the regulations " under the new system in point of expenditure." I must beg leave to observe, that it is so far from *demonstration*, that it scarcely amounts to superficial *plausibility*. For it is to be remembered that the incorporated parishes were under the direction of gentlemen of probably superior talents and abilities,

abilities, animated with zeal for the success of a new and favourite scheme, and yet, after all, the reduction of expence they have effected is a mere trifle; not half so much as I have known occasionally accomplished in particular parishes, by the skill and management of overseers or other individuals upon the old system.

But it is said that at the same time this reduction took place in the *incorporated* parishes, the expence in the *unincorporated* ones of the immediate neighbourhood was considerably advanced. True. But what were these years? There were in the course of them two or three uncommonly severe winters; a circumstance *peculiarly* to the advantage of houses of industry when compared to parishes at large, where there are no such institutions. In the houses of industry above referred to taken collectively, there were about a thousand paupers. These, dispersed over their respective parishes, would have required, perhaps, during the pinching severity of the weather, between two and three hundred fires; whereas in the three houses of industry there were probably not thirty. This article alone, to say nothing of the unusual number thrown out of employment through the several parishes by the inclemency of the seasons, would make a considerable part of the specified difference.

I will,

I will, however, readily acknowledge that Mr. G. might have chosen instances much stronger to his purpose. The reduction of expence in other houses has been vastly greater, and which he might have contrasted with parishes in their neighbourhood. This has been remarkably the case in that opened at Michaelmas, 1781, by the Hundred of Cosford, near Sudbury, in Suffolk, which receives the Poor of eighteen parishes. Prior to the establishment of this house, the annual expence of maintaining their Poor, on an average of seven years, ending in the year 1779, was 2642*l.*; this at Michaelmas 1786 was reduced to 740; and, on a medium of the five years, to about 1000*l.* A most striking reduction most certainly. We must not, however, be too sanguine in our conclusions. We are not told how many poor persons were relieved before the opening of the house; how many were deterred from entering it by the terrors of confinement, and the horrid idea of being banished from their nearest and dearest connections; what hardships they rather submitted to, and how many turned vagabonds, and migrated from their parishes. But however this might be, there was one very striking circumstance. In the course of five years the average number of inhabitants was reduced from near 190 to about 145. In the natural course of things, there could hardly have been this diminution of necessitous persons in the parishes at large. It was not improbably owing
then

then either to the house being an object of horror, or to the uncommon mortality in it during the first two or three years; perhaps to both. In the year 1782 almost one half of the average number of its inhabitants died, and in 1783 and 1784, more than one-fourth. After this horrible slaughter, is it surprising there was a great reduction of expence?

But even admitting that no such causes contributed to this reduction, where is the security of its continuance? It is at present the acknowledged effect of uncommon skill, ability, and zealous exertion in one of its most active superintendents. But can a succession of these be expected in any individuals after the present novelty is over, after the present zeal is evaporated? Have not similar reductions been accomplished by parochial workhouses? And yet, in the revolution of a few years, have they not relapsed into their old course, and their expences, at length, arisen to the same enormous height as the rest of their neighbours? About fifty or sixty years ago, Mr. Townsend informs us, in his *Observations on various Plans offered to the Public, for the Relief of the Poor*, workhouses were opened in the fourteen following towns and parishes:—Greenwich, Chatham, Maidstone, Stroud, and Tunbridge, in Kent; St. Paul's, in Bedford; Luton, in Bedfordshire; Brad-

M

ford,

ford, in Wilts; St. Alban's, Peterborough, Chertsey, Hornchurch, Stockport, and Chelmsford. Before the establishment of these houses, their aggregate annual expence was about 8366*l.* which, in a very few years, was reduced to 4272*l.* or nearly one half; and yet, as appears by the late returns to Parliament, these very parishes have now raised their yearly expenditure to 19,466*l.** So transient have been the benefits of these workhouses. Is there greater, or even so great probability that those of the houses of industry will be more permanent? Are the persons chiefly engaged in the care and direction of them so much or so immediately interested in it? Tradesmen and farmers are directly and instantaneously concerned in lowering the parish rates, because they directly and instantaneously pay them out of their own pockets. Gentlemen and landlords are only remotely so; the more they can reduce the present rates, the more will they raise their future rents. The workhouses were chiefly set on foot by persons of the

* "Such," says Mr. Townsend, "are the boasted advantages of parish workhouses, which operate like the figures we set up to scare the birds, till they have learnt first to despise and then to perch upon the object of their terror. Had these establishments been upon a larger scale; had they comprehended extensive districts, or received the Poor of the whole country, the first effect had been more remarkable; not only as holding out the terror of confinement, but as adding banishment to the loss of liberty." Observations &c, p. 19.

former

former description; the houses of industry were established by men of the latter †.

But granting the longest and most permanent reduction of expence, this is a mere trifling consideration in comparison of what we are next to enquire into; the influence of these institutions upon the lives, the health and strength of the Poor.

S E C T. II.

Mortality of Houses of Industry.

The first circumstance which naturally strikes us respecting large workhouses, or houses of industry, is, that great numbers subsist together in a more close and confined manner, than while dispersed in private habitations through their respective parishes. This occasions a degree of heat in the atmosphere, which diminishes its fitness for respiration; this unfitness is not a little encreased by passing through such a number of lungs, which intirely destroys the vivifying quality of the air, even supposing them all in perfect health. But it is to be remembered

† I have extracts from only four parishes in Kent connected with a kind of house of industry, and, contrary to what is the general fact in most others, three of them have encreased their rates since the parliamentary return.

that here are crowded together, the young and the old, the maimed and diseased; the weak, the sickly, and the infirm. To this pernicious mass is added the unhealthy smells from the raw materials of the manufactures performed in the houses, whether wool, hemp, flax, cotton, &c. This heterogeneous mixture of putrid effluvia is inhaled by the tender lungs of the young, and the debilitated ones of the old and infirm, and cannot but be highly destructive of the first principles of life; nor is it possible that the strictest attention to cleanliness and diet, nor the most regular ventilation, fumigation, &c. of the apartments, should fully and entirely counteract the baleful influence. These may certainly effect much, and, I am persuaded, that whatever can be done by any or all these means conjointly, really has been done by the wisdom and prudence of the gentlemen who have the superintendence of these institutions. By strict unremitted observance of these several particulars, Captain Cook, we are told, lost but a single man in the circumnavigation of the Globe; whereas, his predecessors, not having used equal precautions, had sometimes returned with scarcely a quarter of their original complement. It should not however be forgotten, that a ship and a house are very different things; that a perpetual succession of fresh and pure air is perhaps more easily procured in the former, which is in almost perpetual motion, than in

in the latter, which is fixed to a spot; and it is likewise to be observed, that the sailors were employed in no unwholesome manufactures; nor did they consist of the young and the old, the weak, the infirm, and the sickly; but were men who embarked in perfect health, (him only excepted who died) and in the most vigorous, and least mortal period of human existence.

Another thing very unfavourable to the healthiness of these houses, is the dreadful situation the inhabitants are in when any infectious disorder appears among them. We know with what rapidity these spread, even in large populous towns, where every measure is used to prevent communication. How much must this rapidity be accelerated among persons under the same roof, where the contagion is almost immediate and instantaneous. It is true, medical assistance is always at hand. But how imperfect amends! Towards the latter end of last summer, the small-pox broke out in the Stow house of industry in Suffolk. Thirty-six, out of about one hundred-and-sixty then in the house, soon caught it; of whom seven died. In the country parishes probably not so many would have had it, or perished with it, in twenty years. The politician will say indeed they were most of them past the age of social utility; one being 67, and 5 fast approaching to 80. Humanity and the feeling

feeling heart will suggest different sentiments. However, in justice it must be added, that inoculation immediately put an effectual stop to all further ravages. Sixty-six were inoculated, of which number only one died, and that a woman turned of eighty-two.

But there are other infectious distempers for which medical ingenuity has not yet invented any successful mode of inoculation. In October 1782 the measles attacked the inhabitants of the Cosford house of industry, which, judging from the very modest and excellent account of it given by the Rev. Mr. Mills in No. 34 of Mr. A. Young's *Annals of Agriculture*, is, in all respects, one of the best regulated institutions of the kind now in being. Its total average number of Paupers was about 170, and of children under fifteen a little above sixty. And yet, in less than four months there were twenty-four burials. The same disorder, in the year 1785, broke out in my parish of Dunmow, and a vast number of the children caught it. Our total population was upwards of 1600, of which were between five and six hundred children under 15. In the course of five months, only four children died of this malady, and our whole number of funerals did not exceed twenty.

In the years 1767 and 1781, a putrid fever visited the *Bulkingham House*; in the first of these

two years† 122, and in the second 130 persons died out of an average of about 300; in 1774, 126 in the *Heckingham House* perished of this complaint, out of an average of about 220; at Shipmeadow, in the year 1781, eighty-four were lost out of an average of about 200; and in the Stow house, during the three years 1781-2 and 3, in immediate succession, the annual deaths were upwards of fifty from the same distemper.

These facts, in unison with the above speculative reasoning, render it probable, at least, that Houses of Industry of the size we have hitherto noticed, cannot be so healthy for the individuals they contain as a residence in separate dwellings dispersed through their respective country parishes. This is evidence, however, upon which I would not venture to form any decided opinion.

The most satisfactory proof the subject seems to admit of, results from a comparison of the number of deaths in these houses of persons in similar circumstances as to age, previous sickness &c. with those in parishes at large. The principal difficulty in the case is to ascertain this similarity with a sufficient degree of precision.

† These died, it seems, not of a putrid fever, but, as supposed, from being received into the house before it was properly prepared.

It

It is in vain to look for it among the adult inhabitants of these houses; who, consisting chiefly of the old, the infirm, and the sickly, with a very small proportion indeed of those in perfect health, and in the most vigorous part of life, their aggregate mortality may be vastly higher than in parishes at large, without the smallest imputation of peculiar unhealthiness.

But there is a description of persons with regard to whom the similarity in question may be pretty easily settled. Most of the children under fourteen or fifteen years of age, are, I presume, admitted, nearly in the same condition as the children of the Poor are in general to be found in their respective parishes. It is true, indeed, a sickly child in a family may sometimes bring such family to need parochial assistance sooner than it would otherwise do: but the parents would generally submit to any hardship rather than send such a child by itself, and intirely alone, into a House of Industry; and if the whole family went, should it consist of four or five children, as would probably be the case in the necessitous condition now alluded to, the whole would be nearly in the same circumstances as the Poor of parishes in general; as few families of that size but have frequently one ill. And it will seldom happen that four or five children in a family are sick together, except of infectious distempers, under which it would surely be madness to admit them

them into the House at all. Children, I imagine, are, for the most part, received into these mansions, either because the family is too numerous for the parents to maintain, or upon the death of the father or mother, or both, and without any regard to their own peculiar sickness, or the contrary. It is, therefore, highly probable, that the whole body of children in these Houses are admitted very nearly under the same average circumstances of health or sickness, as are to be met with among the children of the Poor at large, while dispersed in their respective parishes.

There is, however, a possibility of the contrary, and I am willing to make considerable allowance for it. I must at the same time remark, that there is a circumstance on the other side the question, which will more than counterbalance this. A small proportion of the children residing in these houses were born there; there are a small proportion likewise under two years of age, a smaller still under one. But it is well known, that the first month and the first and second year, are at least ten times as mortal as any period between two and fifteen. I see by the list of children inoculated in the Stow House last September, those under five years old, are but a seventh part as many as those between five and twelve, and in the Heckingham House last December, they were nearly as 1 to 3, whereas, in my parish of Dunmow, they are as

2 to 5. In the Heckingham House, at the time now mentioned, the children under two years, were only $\frac{1}{15}$ th of those between two and ten; in Dunmow they are as 1 to about $3\frac{1}{2}$. It is easy to see how vastly this circumstance is in favour of the Houses of Industry.

It has been suggested that the number of children in these houses is extremely fluctuating; that there are sometimes, for instance, 100 in a house, sometimes 120, at others, only 80; that many are admitted one month, and a few months after some of them are taken out by their parents; that some, in the interval, have died, thereby adding to the annual burials, without much increasing the average number annually maintained in the House; and, in fact, as a very obliging and indefatigable correspondent has discovered, a *third* part of the whole number of children are thus alternately admitted, and dismissed in the course of the year. All this is readily allowed; but I must still insist, that, independent of the circumstance already noticed, the different ages and the different degrees of health or sickness of the children thus admitted and dismissed, it is of no consequence; of no importance at all is it, other particulars remaining the same, whether 100 children are maintained in the House uniformly throughout the year, or there be six months 120, and six months only 80, the thing

thing to be regarded, in our present view, being merely the annual average.

In order to make our observations more accurate and decisive, I wished to procure the annual average number of children in these houses of every age from one month to fifteen years, and the annual average number of deaths at each of those ages respectively; but I soon found that such minute information was not attainable. I must be content with such intelligence as I have been able to obtain, and even this, I flatter myself, will be found tolerably satisfactory.

Upon fairly weighing the several circumstances above stated, it appears to me extremely probable, if not absolutely certain, that if the country Houses of Industry are really as healthy as the country parishes at large, the proportion of the deaths of children under fourteen or fifteen years of age ought by no means to be greater in the former than in latter. Let us enquire what is this proportion in country parishes.

*Mortality of Children under Fifteen in Country
Parishes.*

GREAT DUNMOW, ESSEX.

The number of children in this parish under 15, on a medium of two surveys, the first made in January 1785, the second in January 1788, is 545; and the annual deaths $13\frac{1}{2}$, which is about - - - - - 1 in $41\frac{2}{3}$

HUNTON, near MAIDSTONE, KENT.

The number of children in this parish, on a medium of two surveys, one made in 1782, the other 1788, is 157; their annual deaths, on an average of eight years, were about 4, which is - - - - - 1 in $39\frac{1}{4}$

CAVENHAM, in SUFFOLK.

The total population 200, and the number of children under 15 is at present 104; during the last 21 years only 25 of this denomination have died, or scarcely $1\frac{1}{4}$ annually, which is hardly - - - - - 1 in 80

THORN-

THORNDON, in SUFFOLK.

The total population of this parish, according to a very accurate survey made in the year 1782, by the Rector, the ingenious Mr. T. Howes, was 482, and the number of children under 14, 205; of which only one died from the time of the survey to November 1787* 1 in 1000

These two last parishes are instances of such uncommon healthiness, as to be above even the usual *country standard*; the annual mortality of the total population of the latter being about 1 in 58, on an average of twenty years; and of the former only 1 in 66 on an average of the last ten years. Cavenham, indeed, containing only 200 people, is too small for any general application. There are, however, I make no doubt, vast numbers of country parishes, both in Norfolk and Suffolk, as healthy as either of them. The parishes of Thordon and Witheringset, near Bury, immediately contiguous to each other, contain between them, by a survey of 1782, 1265 inhabitants; their joint annual mortality, on a medium of twenty years, is only 1 in 53. And, according to an account sent

* The number of the deaths of infants since 1782 I am not informed.

me by the ingenious Mr. Rickard, of Lantrisant, in Glamorganshire, the five parishes of Lantrisant, Lanwonno, Aberdaw, Lantewitvairdw, and Ystrad-ywodog, contained, by a survey in 1781, 3816 inhabitants, and their annual burials, on an average of the ten years ending with 1781, were exactly 64, which is only one in 59 $\frac{1}{2}$ of their joint total population. Whoever duly considers these several instances, cannot but think that the parishes of Hunton and Dunmow are inferior, in point of healthiness, to the general run of country parishes. However, as the Houses of Industry comprehend not only mere country parishes, but also the market towns which happen to be in their respective districts or hundreds, Dunmow is, perhaps, as proper a place as could have been fixed upon with which to compare them, it consisting both of town and country; and the town, in contradistinction to the country part of the parish, containing between eight and nine hundred people. Its total population, upon an average of two surveys, the one made in 1785, the other in 1788, is 1656; its annual deaths, on a medium of the last twenty years, precisely 40 $\frac{1}{2}$, which is 1 in about 41. This is certainly not below the average mortality of common sized market towns and country parishes taken together; and its yearly deaths of children, we have seen, is 1 in 41 $\frac{2}{3}$. Those in the Houses of Industry ought not to be in higher proportion. How is the fact?

BULKINGHAM HOUSE, IN SUFFOLK,

Opened October 1766, total average annual number of paupers during 20 years about 300; of children under 15 about 200; of which have annually died $22\frac{6}{10}$, or about - - 1 in $8\frac{3}{4}$

N. B. Average number of children under two years about 20, of which very nearly half annually die; in Dunmow the proportion is but about 1 in 9. Mr. Avarne, Rector of Halefworth, who favoured me with this account, observes, that the greater part of the children born in the house, if not soon taken out, die,

STOW HOUSE, SUFFOLK,

Opened 1780, receives Poor from 14 parishes; its annual average of paupers 210, of children under 15 (most of them under 12) about 100, of which have annually died about $7\frac{1}{2}$, or - 1 in 14

N. B. Its annual number of deaths under three years 1 in 4; in Dunmow they are not 1 in 10.

HECK-

HECKINGHAM, NORFOLK,

Opened 1768, 41 parishes, average of paupers during 20 years 216. Number of children under 10 last December 57, of which the annual deaths have been $7\frac{2}{10}$, or almost - - 1 in 8

N. B. Only one in 32 of this denomination annually die in Dunmow.

WICKLEWOOD, NORFOLK.

Opened 1777, 22 parishes, average number of paupers 266, of which the annual deaths have been 44, or about 1 in 6. Average number of children under 15 about 160; their annual deaths not sent me.

SHIPMEADOW, WANGFORD HUNDRED,

Opened 1767, 27 parishes, average number of paupers about 207, annual deaths 1 in $4\frac{1}{6}$; number of children under 15 about 90, annual deaths $10\frac{1}{2}$, or about - - - - - 1 in 9

GRESSING-

GRESSINGHALL, NORFOLK,

Opened 1777, 50 parishes, annual average of paupers 425, annual deaths during 11 years 75, or about 1 in $5\frac{1}{2}$; number of children under 15 about 200, of which have annually died $25\frac{1}{2}$, or - - - - - 1 in $7\frac{3}{10}$

ROLLESBY, for the Hundreds of EAST and WEST FLEGG, NORFOLK,

Opened 1777, 20 parishes, average of paupers 133, of which have annually died about 16, or 1 in about $8\frac{1}{2}$. Annual deaths of children under 15 about 5, which, supposing the average number of children only 45, is 1 in 9; but 1 in 9 as this house seems comparatively a healthy one, I apprehend the number might be more than this. I regret very much that the secretary, Mr. Manning, who appears a very accurate man, has omitted to send them.

COSFORD,

Opened 1781, 18 parishes, average of paupers 165; annual deaths 42, or
O above

above 1 in 4; but the term being only five years, no certain conclusion can be formed. The mortality hitherto has been dreadful. I hoped for better information from this house.

The three Houses of the Hundreds of BOSMERE and CLAYDON, of MUTFORD and LOTHINGLAND, and of SAMFORD, as given in the Return to Parliament in 1776.

Total number of paupers 523; annual deaths 105, or 1 in about 5; infants (which term is not explained) 136, of which, on an average of three years, have annually died 33, or nearly 1 in 4

If by infants are meant all children under ten years old, as seems intimated in one of the Parliamentary Returns, the mortality is shocking, it being at least eight times as great as it ought to have been.

S W E D E N.

In the whole kingdom of Sweden, comprehending both the capital, and all other large and sickly towns, as well as country parishes, on a medium of seven different surveys made in 1757, 1760, 1763,

1763, 1766, 1769, 1772, and 1779, the number of children under fifteen years of age was 799,558, of these die annually on a medium of twenty-one years, 33,893,

That is about — — — 1 in $23\frac{3}{7}$

Annually die.

under 10 years,	563260	32193	1 —	17,42
under 3 —	191682	25142	1 —	7,66
under 1 —	67522	18019	1 —	3,74
between 3 & 15	606876	8651	1 —	70,15
between 3 & 10	370578	7051	1 —	53,97

S T O C K H O L M.

According to the medium of three different surveys in 1757, 1760, and 1763, and according to registers on an average of nine years, from 1755 to 1763, the numbers living and annually dying, at certain different ages, were as follows :

Living.	Annually die.			
under 15	17667	1816	or about 1 in	9,72
under 10	11905	1760	— — — 1 —	6,76
under 1	1393	1070	— — — 1 —	1,30
between 3 & 15	13659	370	— — — 1 —	36,91
between 3 & 10	7897	318	— — — 1 —	24,83

Judging from the preceding accounts, and admitting the reasoning we have adopted, (which I confess at present appears to me unexceptionable) we see that the houses of industry are in general almost

five times as unhealthy for children as my but moderately healthy parish of Dunmow; nearly three times as much so as the whole kingdom of Sweden, with all its large and sickly towns; and considerably more so than even the city of Stockholm, whose mortality is as high as that of any city in Europe. Is it humane, is it politic, thus to poison and destroy our fellow creatures for the pitiful object of saving a few pounds! saving a few pounds immediately to the farmer and tradesman, perhaps also to the gentleman, and, in the end, robbing the public at large of eight or ten times as much. The houses of Bulkingham, Heckingham, Shipmeadow, and Gressingham have saved between them, perhaps, about 1000*l.* a year since their institution; at the same time I am much mistaken if they have not killed very nearly one thousand poor children. If we admit the common estimate of the value of only eight hundred of these raised to a maturity, to be annually 10*l.* a head, here is 8000*l.* a year lost to the public, for 1000*l.* saved to these parishes.

It may be said, perhaps, that the children in these houses are the offspring of the Poor, and that the proportional number of deaths of such children, even in parishes at large, is always considerably greater than that of those of persons of better condition. "Poverty," says Dr. Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, vol. I. p. 128, "though it
" does

“ does not prevent the *generation*, it is extremely
 “ unfavourable to the *rearing* of children. The
 “ tender plant is produced, but in so cold a soil,
 “ and so severe a climate, soon withers and dies.”
 The metaphor here is strikingly beautiful; but
 beautiful metaphors, and well-authenticated facts,
 are very different things. However true the
 Doctor’s* maxim may be in the Highlands of
 Scotland, where he says it is not uncommon for a

* “ In some places,” continues the Doctor, “ one half
 “ the children born die before they are four years old; in
 “ many places before they are seven, and in almost all
 “ places before they are nine or ten. This great mortality,
 “ however, will every where be found chiefly among the
 “ children of the common people, who cannot afford to tend
 “ them with the same care as those of better station.” Had
 the Doctor shewn no greater knowledge on other subjects
 than he has done in those of population and human mortality,
 his *Wealth of Nations* would not have been in such high
 estimation as it now very justly is. So far from true is it
 that in almost all places half the persons die before nine or
 ten years old, that in most country parishes more than half
 pass the age of thirty. In this parish of Dunmow the deaths
 of persons of even above forty are considerably more numerous
 than those beneath. And as to the great and singular mortality
 of poor children, those only excepted which are stench’d up,
 and stifled in large towns and workhouses, and houses of
 industry, it is in general very far from being fact. If, in
 cases of extreme poverty, some of them are lost, from in-
 attentive and criminal negligence, more of those of higher
 rank perish from extreme and injudicious indulgence; and,
 if a few of the former die for want of necessaries, more of
 the latter are killed with excess of kindness.

woman

woman who has borne twenty children not to have two alive, the case, thank God, is very different in England, where the poorest of our people not only *produce* a greater proportion of children than their superiors, but *rear* them likewise. In this parish there are 262 poor families, which have 460 children; there are likewise 116 families of the ranks above them, which have only 120 children; little more than half the proportion of the former. And how stands the ratio of deaths? Those of the latter, on an average of the last five years, have been $3\frac{2}{10}$ ths, which is one in about $37\frac{1}{2}$; those of the former have been only $10\frac{1}{10}$ th, which is but one in $45\frac{1}{2}$; their mortality, of course, almost $\frac{1}{8}$ th less than that of their superiors. So that instead of any objection to our statement of the mortality of children in the houses of industry, arising from their birth and original condition, it ought, on that very account, not improbably, to be rather less than greater.

If these houses annually *kill* such a number of children, we may be sure they proportionably impair the health and weaken the constitution of those whose lives are spared. Thus, while they diminish the parish expences for the *present*, by the slaughter of some of the Poor, they will greatly augment them for the *future*, by furnishing a succession of weak, infirm creatures, not half so capable of the fatiguing labours of husbandry as those who have been brought up in the

the cottages of industrious parents, and been accustomed, almost from their infancy, to all the varieties of weather, and every kind of laborious exertion. Agreeably to this idea, a late writer, an inhabitant I believe of the county of Norfolk, asserts, " that it is an undoubted fact that the Poor, " and more especially the younger part of them, " who have been brought up in those houses, are by " no means so able to perform common country " labour, as those who have been educated with " their parents in cottages. Accustomed to the " hot atmosphere of workhouses, and kept the " greatest part of their time within doors, they " cannot bear the common changes of the weather, " but shrink so much from the winter's cold, that " they are absolutely unable to pull turnips, and do " any other necessary rural works, which require " their being the greater part of the day in the " open air. The coarse food and hard lodging of " the farmer's servants are likewise objects of " complaint; the former not being equally delicate with that to which they have been accustomed in their Houses of Industry; and the " latter being much colder than that to which they " have been used in these confined and crowded " habitations. The consequence of these and " other similar circumstances, is, that the farmers " almost universally refuse, or very reluctantly " take into their service, boys, or young men, " who have long lived in any House of Industry." I have very little doubt but that this is generally true,

true, as I well know it is almost universally the case with respect to parochial workhouses, which are Houses of Industry upon a smaller scale.

These houses it is true, frequently oblige the farmers to take the poor children of their respective parishes as soon as they are of a proper age. But this, I am afraid, is only making a bad matter worse. It not only subjects the farmer to the hardship of having infirm, awkward, debilitated servants, instead of healthy, robust and dexterous ones from the cottages of the industrious, but it gives a kind of preference to the former, and thereby discourages the latter.

But supposing the long continuance in these enervating mansions neither diminishes the health, the strength, nor future dexterity of these children; there is another circumstance judiciously noticed by several writers; which is, that these children, when they come into the world, are remarkably shiftless. “ Having had every necessary
 “ article provided for them, they know nothing of
 “ that solicitous care there is in poor industrious
 “ families to provide their scanty allowance from
 “ day to day; their provisions are all set down
 “ before them ready dressed; they hear of no
 “ difficulties to procure them; the work they do
 “ is by way of stint, and when their task is done,
 “ they think no further about it, nor how they are
 to

“ to contribute to their next meal ; they are totally
 “ ignorant of every domestic business. Whereas,
 “ in the poorest houses, they are obliged from their
 “ earliest infancy to set their hands to all they can
 “ possibly do, and never know an end to their
 “ labours till night calls them to their necessary
 “ rest ; the boys rise in the morning, and go out to
 “ work with their fathers as soon as they are ca-
 “ pable of it, and the girls mean time are em-
 “ ployed with their mothers in some necessary
 “ domestic affairs.” In due time these children
 go into the service of the farmer or the tradesman
 to whom they become eminently useful. In the
 course of six, eight, or ten years they probably
 marry, and return again to the habitation of a cot-
 tage. From the deep impressions of early child-
 hood, they are prepared to encounter the hardships
 of their situation, and are well furnished with all
 that domestic skill and management which are
 necessary to make the best of their poor condition.
 The children, on the contrary, brought up in the
 Houses of Industry, having passed the common
 period in comparatively useless servitude, they at
 length form the matrimonial connection, retire to
 a miserable hovel, which they soon fill with children,
 dirt, and nastiness. From the original defect of
 their education, they are almost as unskilled and
 awkward in the care and management of their
 increasing family as a fine gentleman and lady
 would be who were suddenly reduced from affluence

to the extremest poverty, and feel its miseries with nearly the same keen and afflicting distress; and they are consequently very early prepared for a return to a parochial workhouse, or district House of Industry.

5 Upon the whole, whatever part of G's scheme should be adopted, it is hoped that of district Houses of Industry will be carefully guarded against; it being scarcely possible, in my apprehension, to conceive any institutions more pregnant with present and future mischief. They are dreadful slaughter-houses to the old, and they kill at least four or five times as many of the young as would otherwise die in the same compass of time*; while those whose lives they do not destroy, they yet, I fear, so weaken and debilitate, render so comparatively unfit for country service, and so unprepared for domestic management, as to occasion

* I should be happy to see this fairly and fully refuted. But I am at present strongly apprehensive, from most impartial consideration of the evidence above adduced, that the increased mortality is really much higher than I have stated it. The only way of arriving at perfect certainty, must be from an accurate account of the condition of every child, as to health or sickness, upon its admission, the annual average number of every age respectively, and the average number of deaths at each of those ages. This information in the hands of some man, like Dr. Price, nicely and profoundly skilled in subjects of this kind would settle the matter beyond further controversy.

their

their much sooner falling a burden to their respective parishes.

To Houses of Industry upon a much smaller scale, and receiving the Poor of five or six small country parishes immediately contiguous, erected upon the most healthy spot the country affords, and under the alternate direction of the overseers, &c. of each parish respectively, all the above objections are not equally strong. That opened upon Cox Heath in Kent about seventeen years ago, seems to be a presumptive proof of this. It receives the Poor of six neighbouring parishes; its numbers have been from thirty five to fifty, and of children from fifteen to twenty-five; no person has died of any infectious disorder bred in the house, and only three children have died in all: but there is not a healthier spot in the kingdom; as a probable evidence of this I have been assured that in the year 1778, out of 12,000 men encamped there upwards of five months, only one died in that compass of time. The earnings in this house are one third higher than in most of those in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Before I dismiss this part of our subject I cannot help noticing a very singular proposal of Mr. Gilbert's bill, which is, that the Poor's Rates in future shall never exceed the average of the years 1783-4 and 5. This is surely an absurdity of the first

magnitude. He might just as rationally have proposed a bill that no further taxes should ever be laid upon this kingdom than what at present exist. Both are equally dependant on future contingencies. If we should eight or ten years longer be blessed with the continuance of peace, and if population should be nearly stationary, a considerable reduction of the national debt will be effected, a reduction of taxes will soon follow; this will lower the price of provisions, and naturally occasion a diminution of the rates, even though our Poor Laws and their execution remain in the present state. On the contrary, should we soon be again plunged into the horrors of war, and add another hundred million to our present debt; and should there be a rapid increase of manufactures, trade, and people, an augmentation of taxes, an increase of the price of provisions, and of parish rates would be the inevitable consequence; or should the proposed legal limitation take place, it would only throw that burden entirely upon the humane and benevolent, which ought to be equally shared by the crnd and penurious †.

Since writing the preceding pages, I have read Mr. H. B. Dudley's letter to Mr. Gilbert. It contains some acute observations on the general absurdity, and many inconsistencies of Mr. G's bill. But I must beg leave to remark, that of the eight causes to which he ascribes the "*alarming* increase of Paupers, as well as Poor's Rates," some of them have operated upwards of two hundred years, and that others are actually less now than in any former period. They most of them, indeed, have had their local and incidental effects;
but

Mr. A C L A N D ' s P L A N.

The great objects of this gentleman's scheme are " to secure to the Poor a comfortable independent support under all the exigencies that " may attend them from age, sickness, or a numerous family; and to restore them to that " natural right which they ought certainly to enjoy, in common with the beasts of the field, " and the fowls of the air, that of getting their " food where they can best find it, and to effect this " after such a manner as shall put an end to all " parochial disputes about settlements." The means by which he proposes to accomplish these several ends are the establishment, throughout England and Wales, of one general society, for the purpose of entitling the members thereof, in consequence of the payment of a certain sum or sums weekly, to a certain weekly receipt during sickness or accident, not occasioned by any unlawful action, or upon being rendered by age or infirmity incapable of labour. I cannot now descend to the minutiae or several inferior particulars of the

but all put together cannot have occasioned the 20th part of the complained of evils; and as for his proposals for *the modification and strict enforcement of the laws already enacted*, although a few of them are extremely judicious, their most compleat execution would not in greater proportion reduce our present expences.

proposed

proposed bill; but this is the general outline, the grand and leading idea, to which I mean entirely to confine myself.

An act of the intended description might possibly answer many of the valuable ends above specified with regard to a few individuals; but that it should be so extensively and universally efficacious as the ingenious author seems to apprehend, there is not, I think, the smallest probability. The whole, indeed, appears to go upon this fundamentally erroneous conception, namely, that the present earnings of the Poor, if properly managed, are perfectly adequate to their comfortable maintenance. This, if there be any weight in what has been advanced in the foregoing pages, is by no means true; to which I will venture to add, that nine-tenths, at least, of the country labouring Poor, who form, perhaps, three-fourths of the whole body of labourers in the kingdom, which receive parochial assistance, have been reduced to that necessity, not from vice and profligacy, not from laziness and indolence, but unavoidable inability to support themselves and families by the income of their labour, and with that degree of skill and management they possess. That such should be able to continue a subscription of eight or ten shillings a year, (which Mr. A's proposed weekly payments would amount to), long enough to entitle them to the promised weekly allowance, is impossible.

But

But granting the possibility of this, there is, by the acknowledgment of Dr. Price himself, a deficiency in the principles of the calculation, upon which the proposed allowances, in the cases of incapacity of labour, are grounded. They go on the supposition that, upon an average, only one in 48 of the whole aggregate society, is, (except from old age), so incapacitated at the same time. This, the Doctor says, is *possible*; but that it is *probable*, neither himself, nor Mr. A. have given a rittle of evidence, and I am afraid no satisfactory evidence can be produced. I readily own, at the same time, I have at present before me no proof to the contrary; I therefore mention it merely as a matter of doubt, and as an object of further discussion,

But this doubtfulness out of the question, there is another thing which very forcibly strikes my apprehension, and that is, that this promised future income, instead of sharpening the spur to industry, will only blunt it. The great incitements to active exertion, and vigilant œconomy among the lower classes, are the dread of want on the one hand, and the hopes of a comfortable provision against sickness and old age on the other. The operation of both these, the Plan before seems in a great measure likely to destroy: it tells the young labourer, whether in service or married, if he contributes twopence a week to the legal public fund

fund, he shall thereby purchase a security against all the contingencies of sickness, infirmity, and age. The assurance is pleasing, his heart is at rest, his utmost exertion, he thinks, can secure nothing further. By this, therefore, his views are bounded. The regular payment of the legal demand is all he minds. It is useless to lay up money while at service; he, therefore, squanders it away, as fancy or inclination dictates; or, if married, provided he can live from hand to mouth, as the phrase is, and pay what the law requires of him, it is fully sufficient. In the mean time his wants and necessities increase, and the sum of two-pence a week, small as it is, he finds it more and more difficult to spare; the regular payment is soon discontinued; his hopes are consequently blasted, and he sinks into poverty much sooner than he would have done, had this flattering prospect never been held out to him.

It may be further remarked, that the Plan we are considering, proposes no measures to obviate the increased expences of living, from the possible increase of the price of provision; for the sudden and exorbitant advance of them upon particular emergencies; for the incidental severity of the seasons, and the incidental scarcity of work: and yet from these, and these alone, have almost all the hardships and distresses of the Poor originated; and from these will they chiefly originate in time to come.

To this it may be added, that the proposed tax upon servants and labourers would furnish a plausible pretext, (which would not improbably operate) for a proportionable advance of wages. The tax already imposed upon masters on account of the servants they keep, has not enabled such masters, indeed, to lower their wages in the same degree, and the reason is obvious. The tax is not laid upon all masters universally, and if those upon whom it is laid attempted to deduct it from their servants' wages, they would soon find that they could get nobody to serve them. But the tax upon servants now under consideration would be universal, and consequently the immediate reason for the advancement of wages would be universal likewise; and should this reason actually operate, it would operate to no beneficial purpose; it would furnish no additional motives to a more industrious or a more economical provision for futurity; whereas, should an adequate advancement in the wages of the labourer, the mechanic, and the manufacturer take place, the desired end would be sufficiently answered, without the assistance of Mr. Acland's Plan, or that of any body else. But this advancement must arise from the natural course of future events, and not from any legal interposition, which would do unbounded, if not irreparable mischief. If agriculture and manufactures should so flourish, that the demand for

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labour

labour increase faster than our people, and faster than the abridgment and facilitation of work, wages will inevitably rise, and the rates as naturally sink. Should the contrary happen, the former will be lowered, and the latter would be raised; the Poor must otherwise either emigrate or perish, unless further supported by the voluntary contributions of the kind and charitable.

As to the other ends proposed by Mr. Acland's Plan, " The restoring the Poor to that natural
 " right which they ought enjoy in common with
 " the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air,
 " of getting their food where they best can find
 " it, and the effecting this after such a manner as
 " shall put an end to all disputes about settle-
 " ments;" they carry the appearance, indeed, of great wisdom and humanity, and yet, when nicely examined, I am apprehensive they would be found destitute of both.

With regard to the *privilege of getting their bread where they best can find it*, this the bulk of Poor already pretty fully enjoy at the time they can most advantageously use it, (i. e.), while single, and at service. They can then range at large, and chuse that settlement which affords the best future prospect. After marriage, they naturally become as it were immoveable. While unconnected, they may
 traverse

traverse the globe, but when the bonds of Hymen are thrown over them, like mere vegetables, they are

Fixed to a spot,
To draw nutrition, propagate, and rot.

If they *transplant* themselves, instead of becoming more vigorous and flourishing, three quarters of them would only wither and die. Allow them the full, unrestrained liberty of going in quest of better subsistence wherever they can find it, unless they have at the same time certain knowledge where it is, you give them up to useless vagrancy, and all its horrid trains of wretchedness and misery. Vague, ungrounded report, assures them, that at such a place, at the distance, perhaps, of two or three hundred miles, they can live most comfortably. The man, his wife, and children, set out for this land flowing with milk and honey; by the time of their arrival, they have spent their little all, and find that the whole they had heard of this *Elysium* was an idle tale. No work is to be had, and they have nothing to do but to beg their way back again, or wander they know not whither, pilfering and stealing, and *enjoying the high privilege of the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, of getting their food where they best can find it.*

And with respect to the last benefit proposed, *the putting an end to all disputes about settlements*, this is a folly, which although it has lately, for obvious reasons, very much increased, may yet safely be left to the self-interest of every parish gradually to cure. For it is to be observed, that these legal contests are seldom entered upon, as Mr. D. and others insinuate, at the mere fancy and discretion of Overseers, but in consequence of the joint opinion and approbation of the major part of a parish. If these will indulge the ridiculous fancy of spending 50 or 60*l.* to avoid the possible contingency of paying so many shillings or pence, let dear-bought experience teach them wisdom; which, by degrees, it undoubtedly will, unless they are absolute fools or lunatics. At worst, they are only in the case of numerous individuals, who will cheerfully throw away a thousand pounds to secure a pepper-corn. But hence many a wise and learned lawyer gains a fortune, and lolls in his carriage, while his *victorious* client goes bare-foot, and becomes a beggar. But surely neither the former nor the latter instances of madness merit the restraining hand of those judicious guardians Mr. D. would appoint.

Upon the whole, Mr. Acland's Plan, though it might be of considerable advantage to a few individuals, especially those drunken, profligate manufacturers, who, though they have great wages,

spend all they earn, without regarding the necessities of their families, whom they leave to perish with cold and hunger, in rags and filth; yet, when applied to the more sober and industrious part of our labourers in the kingdom at large, is, most probably, *the baseless fabric of a vision.*

CONCLUSION.

We have now, I think, with some degree of probability, at least, established the points at first proposed. The several causes commonly assigned for the increase of our Poor, and the expence of maintaining them, are, we have seen, in a great measure groundless. Our Poors' Laws, and their defective execution, the number of our ale-houses, the increasing vice and profligacy of the lower classes, with the engrossing and consolidation of farms, though they each of them may have incidentally contributed something, are yet all together by no means adequate to the general effect. The grand and leading cause, and which has operated in other countries as well as our own, has been the greater advance in the price of provisions than in the price of labour. This alone will at once account for the increased numbers, the increased expences, and the increased distresses of the Poor. This removed, the complained of evils would gradually vanish. Such removal, however, cannot

cannot safely be effected by the interposition of Government, but must be the natural result of future contingencies. The new remedies hitherto practised, or hitherto proposed, are big with present and future mischief. Our general system of Poor Laws is a venerable pile, raised by the hands of skilful architects, and stands a distinguished monument of the wisdom and humanity of the British nation. Like every other edifice, it is liable, indeed, to the injuries of times and seasons, and must want occasional repairs and occasional improvements; but if pulled entirely down, we might stand a chance of either being buried in its ruins, or, at best, of never raising any thing in its stead of equal grandeur, utility, or beauty.

F I N I S.



